Second Valley Challenge Notes
Garry Benson -
14/01/2017

1. Judging Photography

What do I know about photography? Why should I be the judge?

I started taking photographs at age seven. At 15 I was accepted as a trainee Cinematographer and Newsreel Cameraman with Cinesound News. I've worked as a Cinematographer and Photojournalist all over the world, particularly in SE Asia, Europe and the USA.

My photographs have been published in newspapers, magazines and on TV. For nearly 30 years I also taught Photography in TAFE, residential workshops in schools such as Geelong Grammar and exotic places like France, Hawai'i and Bali.

When I'm looking at a photograph critically with a view to giving an award or a critique to the photographer here are some of the things I consider:

1. **Size:**
   Look at the actual size of the photograph and try to visualize it in response to the subject.

2. **Shape:**
   Does the shape of the photograph (landscape or portrait) suit the subject matter? For example, a very long and thin image can add to the drama of a landscape.

3. **Title of the Photograph:**
   - What is the title of the photograph?
   - What does it tell me about the photograph?
   - And how does it guide my interpretation?
   - Think about how I might have interpreted the photograph if it had been called something else.

4. **Subject Matter:**
   - What is the photograph of? Is it unusual, unexpected, controversial or intriguing?
   - Does it lend itself to comparison to work by a famous photographer or is it derivative?
   - Do I understand the symbolism in the photograph?

5. **Emotional Response:**
   - Does the photograph generate an emotional reaction in me?
   - What is the overall mood of the photograph, and is this suitable for the subject?

6. **Composition:**
   - How have the elements of the photograph been placed?
   - Does my eye flow across the whole photograph or does one element selfishly dominate? Is the main focus of the photograph slapbang in the centre of the photograph (both vertically and horizontally), or off to one side?
   - Is there anything that draws my eye into or across the photograph?

·   Also consider whether it's been slavishly copied from reality or has thought been put into which elements were included?

7. **Skill:**

What level of technical skill does the photographer display, making allowance for someone who's just starting out and someone who's an experienced photographer?

A beginner may not have been technically skilful in every element of their photograph, but there's usually some aspect that's worth highlighting for the way it was dealt with and the potential it demonstrates.

8. **Colour & Texture:**
·   Has colour & texture been used realistically or used to convey emotion?
·   Are the colours warm or cool and do they suit the subject?
·   Has a restricted or monochrome palette been used?
·   Have complementary colours been used in the shadows and are there reflected colours (colours 'bouncing' from one object onto another)?

It's been estimated that the general public spend only about 7 seconds looking at each photograph and then moving on to the next one. Time yourself!

Learn to look deeper into the photograph using some of the criteria above. It will not only change the way you look at photography and art, but also influence your own photographs.

2. DIY photo mounting for display

If you're preparing prints for the Second Valley Challenge or the Photography section of the Yankalilla Show just do steps 1-5 and add a label on the back with your name, contact phone number, which section you're entering and the title.

My friend Georgie asked me to help her mount some prints to look like a gallery in her living room. She has a great, well-lit wall that's painted with kid/waterproof paint, so I could use tape & Velcro tabs.

The foam core has enough dimension to make the photos look like they've been professionally mounted, but it only costs a wee bit per large print compared to professional mounting. And it's super light, which makes hanging these on the wall a breeze! (more about that later in the post).

To mount photos or prints, you'll need:
• foam core board
• an adhesive Spray
• a soft cloth
• a large ruler
• cutting mat or thick cardboard [to protect your table]
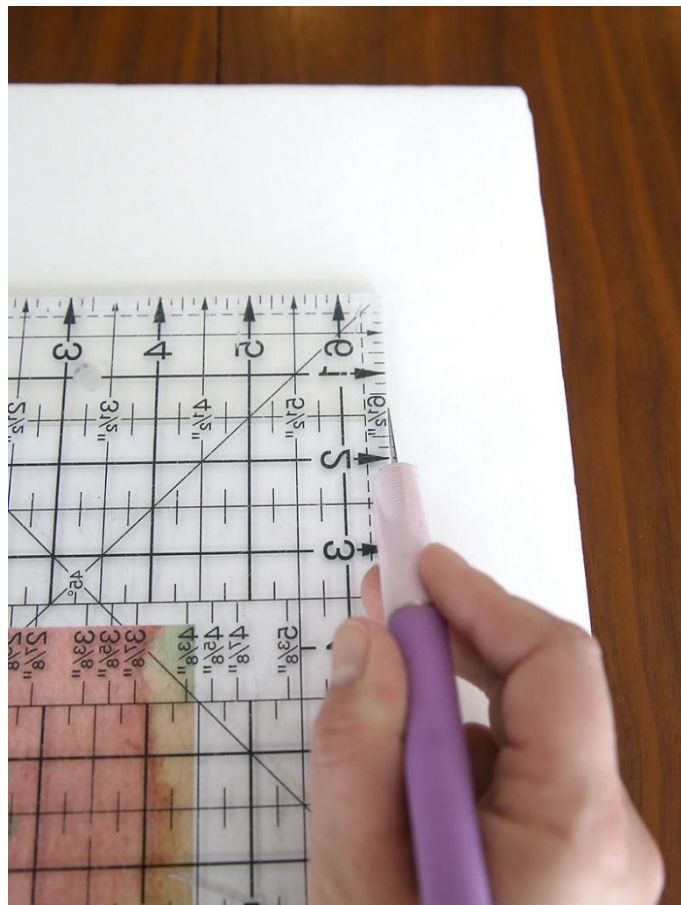• a level and
• an exacto knife with a new blade.

1. The first thing you want to do is make sure your prints are as flat as possible. I printed mine at Officeworks, and they come rolled, so I unrolled them and laid them under heavy books for a few days to get them flattened out. Do not skip this step. It also allows the print to 'dry' out as moisture can make the print curl.
2. To mount a print, place it face down on a clean surface. Apply adhesive all the way around the edges, as close to the edge as possible. If your photos are still a little curved instead of flat, it's a good idea to apply a second row of adhesive all the way around the edges.
3. Then apply a small strip of adhesive right in the centre of the print. Flip the print over and lay it on top of a piece of foam core. Using the soft cloth, press down in the middle of the print. Then swipe from the middle out to one corner, smoothing the print down flat as you press down the adhesive on the edges. Continue swiping from the middle out to make sure the print is as flat as possible.
4. Once the print is adhered, trim away all the excess foam core. Use a large cutting mat and ruler to make this easier. And BE SURE your exacto knife has a fresh blade so you'll get a clean, smooth cut.
5. At this point it's a good idea to let the print rest, perhaps with a few books on top of it, for a day or two. If you hang it immediately, the print may start to curl back up a little and the adhesive might not hold.
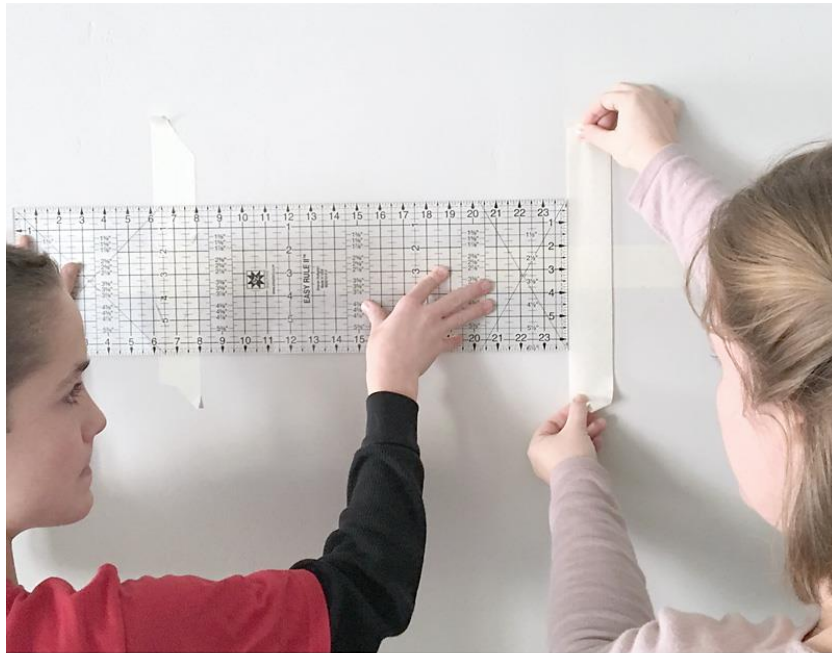
1. Hanging the mounted prints on the wall is a snap! No nails, no sawtooth picture hangers, just use Velcro tabs [available at most discount stores]. Two sets of strips per print is plenty, and they're so much easier to use than nails!
2. To get the prints even and perfectly spaced on the wall, I used 2 inch wide masking tape. I started by placing a long horizontal strip of tape all the way across the wall, right at the space that would be in between the top and bottom rows of prints. Then I placed vertical strips of tape 16 inches apart.

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This created "picture slots" for each print. I applied the command strips to the back of the foam core, took off the backing from the strips, and then just stuck the prints on the wall, one in each "slot" as you can see above.

Once I removed the masking tape, I had all 14 prints up on the wall with exactly 2 inches of space between each one. They were perfectly spaced and aligned on the first try! No nails, no trying to get the frame to hang straight, no adjustments.