

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?

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- 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.