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~ NOVEMBER 2020 ~

COMMITTEE CHATTER

From Steve T

NOVEMBER 2020 MEETING

At last we can return to holding physical meetings!

The November 11th meeting will be back in the United Church hall at 19h30. We decided to try something different and see if it works well for everyone:

- DPIs will be judged remotely, as they have been since lockdown, but we will show all the images on the big screen at the start of our meeting
- Prints will be judged by our own panel of club judges, so please bring your prints to the meeting as usual
- You may enter three DPI's (two set and one open **or** one set and two open) **and** thee prints (two set and one open **or** one set and two open)
- DPI's are to be entered on Photovault and prints to be brought to the meeting
- The advantages of prejudging all the DPIs are:
 - the external judge does not have to travel on the N2 at night
 - we can enjoy pouring over the images and comments on our computers at home
 - country members can also enjoy the images
 - we can either have shorter meetings or make good use of the time saved for discussions or a speaker
- This is an experiment. If the proposed format is not to everyone's liking, we will review it, but let's see how it goes

- ! We must all sanitise our hands on arrival
- ! Seating will be well spaced
- ! Mask up when close to others
- ! Let's still be careful

- BWI meetings will probably not resume before January 2021

COMMITTEE 2021

The end of the year is in sight and there have **STILL** been no nominations for any new committee members yet. We need proposals for a new Secretary, Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Please step forward if you are willing to stand and/or nominate someone else. Just talk to me and I will deal with the process. My cell number is 076 565 6250. Email stevetrimby@gmail.com.

OUTINGS AND WEEKENDS AWAY

Next years' committee may have different ideas, but I propose that five different members (not necessarily committee members) arrange 5 one day outings next year. Please let me know if you are willing to arrange an outing and tell me where you would like to take us. I would also like suggestions for the weekends away, which you don't have to arrange (unless you want to) - I just need ideas for locations.

Looking forward to seeing you at our first physical meeting since lockdown began.

FEEDBACK FROM THE WCPF MEETING ON 24TH OCTOBER

- Much of the meeting was dedicated to the Interclub event
- Several clubs reported that they held Zoom meetings through lockdown but attendance and competition entries declined
- Most clubs are ready to return to physical meetings but not all have access to their venues yet
- Several clubs reported an increase in membership numbers recently
- It seems that HPS has followed the trends in the above points
- Several clubs intend to continue with remote judging, some have even used international judges
- CTPS had a talk on abandoned buildings by a paid speaker. They said it was excellent and will send out a link to the recording
- Rules now apply for people who are members of two clubs. They are expected to announce their choice of "main" club at the start of the year and remain loyal to that club for Interclub competitions
- There is a photography club in Gansbaai and they will also be joining the WCPF
- TPS are starting something called "Level up" which will be available to all photographers to help them produce a body of work beyond the structure of club photography. It sounds very interesting. They will send out details soon

AUDIO VISUALS

From Irmel

082 372 9824 irmel@avcreations.co.za

For the HPS AV group and anyone who is interested in creating Audio Visuals, the following info from AV makers South Africa:

Our next Zoom meeting : Saturday 31st October 11:00

We will discuss the sequences loaded to our YouTube channel. The link for the Zoom meeting is:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/72091506572?pwd=WmFLaXF1QmNjMDdnamdONFg5N3dNZz09>

The link to the channel is:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgqW8PbEhrJzIEjv_Lor_sA

Ingrid Gane will inspire us as well with some of her special AV magic.

The STOP AV salon

Please get your entries to us on time. The closing date is 14th November

<https://sites.google.com/site/avmakerssouthafrica/home/stop-salon-2020>

The (Virtual) 7th Ladybrand Convention : Taking place on Saturday 21st November and Saturday 28th November

<https://sites.google.com/site/avmakerssouthafrica/2020-ladybrand>

The Zoom links will be provided later.

WEEKDAY / WEEKEND WALKS ESCAPING IT ALL

Greyton Weekend

WET WET WET ~ *Maggie Damp* ~

Even though it was cold, wet and grey in Greyton – it did not stop the enthusiasm of all the photographers.

On Friday afternoon we set off to Oewerzicht, 9km from the quaint village of Greyton that is nestled in a hollow in the majestic Riviersonderend mountain range. Those staying over there were Steve and Yvonne, Gavin and Denise, Helder and Sarah, and myself and David.

The newly renovated stone cottages at Oewerzicht are situated on the banks of the Sonderend River. The cottages were beautifully decorated and came with a King-size bed, en-suite bathroom and fire-place that was perfect for the cold rainy nights (once the dry firewood was shared out!).

The fully equipped communal kitchen with indoor braai area was the perfect gathering place to kick off the weekend with a “lekker braai”. We had a wonderful evening and passionate photographers shared stories and even pitched the club and photography to a couple who joined the festivities.



After breakfast the next morning we headed into Greyton and off to the Saturday local market.

The rainy conditions had us seeking shelter at Vio's Coffee Shop, but not before Marelize got some great shots of a little girl, delightfully dancing bare foot in the rain with her pink tulle fairy dress...



At Vio's we were joined by Wessel, Marelize, Peter and Mari and Elizma. Denise captured six horses trotting down the main road through town, who have grazing rights in the town! After our "tea and cake" we decided to go to the neighboring town of Genadendal. This charming and very photogenic mission village, the oldest in South Africa, presents loads of photographic opportunities.



We had a leisurely afternoon exploring before we all met up for a delicious dinner at Blain on Main in Greyton.



After breakfast the next morning at Ambiance, where Helder and Sarah also added to their art collection, we headed off to the Blue Hippo Farm where we had an exciting little 4x4 adventure ride through some rocky streams to get to the dam where we got to see the most beautiful views of clouded mountains.



This proudly off the grid farm offered plenty of photographic opportunities with horses galloping around, beautiful fauna and flora and a herd of alpacas.

After saying our goodbyes we all went off in our own directions – no doubt with many photo stops along the way home.

These outings shared with like-minded passionate photographers are inspiring and a great time to not only get to know fellow club members better, but also an opportunity to hone our photographic skills.

Make sure not to miss out on the next outing – it's always proven to be an enriching experience – not only from a photographic point of view, but also from a personal point of view.

See you there next time – Maggie D



After a couple of wet, but enjoyable days in Greyton, the sun came out and Peter Dewar led us on an adventurous 4x4 drive to the top of Blue Hippo farm. I looked for a composition at the dam and found this leading line of lily pads, working like a path to the mountain. I used an ND filter and a polariser to smooth the water and pop the colour.

~ Steve T ~

A small sample of nature's amazing engineering, shown off at the recent Helderberg Hospice Open gardens.

If this is where your photographic passions lies:



Elgin Open Gardens
Saturday 31 October and Sunday 01 November
Saturday 07 and Sunday 08 November
www.elginopengardens.co.za



Old Nectar Open Gardens, Jonkershoek, Stellenbosch
Saturday 31 October and Sunday 01 November, 09h00 - 17h00
R50 a ticket; cash only, sold at the gate



2020 PROGRAMME

1st Wednesday of the month : BWI (cancelled until further notice)

2nd Wednesday of the month : set and open competition, digital and print ([online until further notice](#))

Audio Visuals (cancelled until further notice)

MONTH	DATE	SET SUBJECT	PUBLIC HOLIDAYS
November	? Wednesday 04 Nov	A boiled egg, sunglasses and a kettle	
	Wednesday 11 Nov	A boiled egg, sunglasses and a kettle	
	? Wednesday 25 Nov	AV : 'Thirty Days'	
December	? Wednesday 02 Dec	Unexpected combination	Wed 16 th
	Wednesday 09 Dec	Gala Evening	Fri 25 th Sat 26 th

3: Different criteria for different categories**3.1****Documentary photography – wild life, nature, photojournalism, travel, social comment**

As has been mentioned before, these categories should not be manipulated.

The essential ingredient of any good documentary image is information. These photographs show you what something looks like; record details of texture, shape and colour; they can also depict behavior of animal or people and processes; capture “the decisive moment”.

3.1.1

Photojournalistic pictures would be at home in a newspaper or magazine, maybe accompanying a story of an event of topical interest.

3.1.2

Sport pictures are also a kind of journalistic photography where action is usually emphasized to good effect. In evaluating this category the judges should put themselves in the place of a picture editor for a major newspaper or magazine and decide whether the picture is worthy of page 1, breaking news (top award), editorial, leading feature article or sports page (top award or excellent), other pages (excellent or acceptable) or file 13 (rejected). Newsworthiness, contemporary relevance, visual impact, information, capturing action or emotion and good technical quality are important criteria for this category.

3.1.3

For **nature and wild life** a suitable application would be as illustrations in a coffee-tablebook, magazine or scientific presentation.

There are some traditional nature rules that need revision. There is a tendency to treat these rules as holy writ that must be applied blindly and uncompromisingly. For example “there must always be a highlight in the eye” which is an overvalued idea.

You can find many examples of excellent wild life pictures by internationally acclaimed masters that do not comply with this and other similar rules, therefore judges are urged not to penalize an otherwise excellent shot because of this and any other petty rule.

Another absurd requirement is that a four legged animal must show all its limbs and that the feet or tail may never be obscured or amputated. The natural environment often refuses to cooperate in adhering to these shibboleths and one should rather be looking for what the whole picture is conveying rather than getting upset by a twig or bit of grass that cuts across the shape of an animal. “More space in front than behind” is also a rule that can very effectively be broken – for example in a shot of a water bird taking off or landing and leaving a wake behind. Foreshortened front or back views of animals should also be acceptable if the information in the picture or the effect is interesting enough – even the Bushmen painted pictures including foreshortening!

Showing a tightly-cropped view of part of an animal can also be acceptable. Showing more than a minimal amount of the environment of a specimen can sometimes be better than almost totally isolating it. Nature photography that tackles conservation issues such as environmental degradation, loss of habitat and poaching should also be acceptable.

The best nature and wild life photographs evoke a sense of wonder; reveal something that is not well known; are motivated and informed by insight into, empathy with and knowledge of nature.

3.1.4

Travel photography should be more than mere holiday snapshots. It should present the experience of travel in a positive light, concentrating on the most picturesque aspects of travel destinations. The best travel pictures show not only the environment but also people, travelers enjoying saunas, swimming pools, beaches, sunshine, boating, water sport, mountaineering, skiing, hunting, on safari – in fact anything that would be appropriate for a travel pamphlet or advertisement for a particular destination.

3.1.5

Social comment is not necessarily a category that is specifically included in club or salon competitions but, looking at most non-club photography, maybe it should. It is certainly one of the most relevant genres in this medium. Here we are looking for pictures of how people live, work, and play, suffer, love or dress. It can also take us into homes, work places, the street, the theatre, clubs – almost anywhere where people do things that some of us may not be aware of. Good social documentary photography shows human behavior, feeling and emotion; something more than a few poor people sitting outside a hut. It should tell an interesting story with insight and empathy rather than a superficial uninvolved snapshot.

As many documentary photographs must capture the action at the right moment, the finer points of photographic design are not nearly as important for them as for pictorial or any other creative category; one should certainly not expect a carefully constructed composition. Aesthetic appeal can often be superseded by scientific, topical or social interest. If however a documentary picture has excellent aesthetic qualities that can increase its value but these qualities must always be judged as secondary to the requirement of providing factual information. It would be unfair to judge these photographs too harshly on matters such as lighting or composition.

3.2

Pictorial photography – landscape, portrait, table-top, nude

3.2.1

Historically, pictorial photography as a category began in the mid-19th century and the father of this genre was Henry Peach Robinson who created photographic compositions using cut-and paste or photomontage techniques. Since around 1920 pictorial photography has largely been confined to amateur camera clubs all over the former British Empire.

A good pictorial photograph would comfortably hang on the wall of a respectable middle class home together with pleasant landscapes, still lifes or portraits of attractive or interesting people. In other words it should please the eye and not frighten the horses.

The idea behind a pictorial image is that it should be a pleasant picture, easy to understand, relatively simple and balanced in composition.

Over the years there have been some traditional criteria that call for compositional devices such as focal point, asymmetrical divisions of space based on thirds and avoidance of cutting off shapes or touching the edge of the format. These criteria of dubious value are however not central to the character of this category. The formal requirements for pictorial photography need to be updated, as they derive from rather simplistic “rules of composition” established by Sunday painters in the 19th century. Since then a lot of water has flowed under the bridge and more modern aesthetic principles of design are being taught at colleges that offer courses in photography.

Photographic judges should be aware of the work of leading modern and contemporary exponents of portraiture and landscape such as Yousuf Karsh, Arnold Newman, Herb Ritts, David Bailey, Annie Liebowitz, Ansel Adams, Herman Potgieter and David Goldblatt.

Seeing the work of these photographers should open up what has been a rather closed formulaic approach to these genres. Landscape and portrait conventions in South African amateur photography are extremely restrictive and photographers who have been more adventurous have been penalized for not following them. Judges must be aware that there are many different ways that a portrait or landscape can successfully be photographed.

3.2.2

An excellent **portrait** need not be a standardized head and shoulders in $\frac{3}{4}$ view, although it can be that. Environmental portraits are also acceptable, provided that the environment does not compete for attention too much with the person. In this case it would be nit-picking to routinely complain that the background is too busy if it is appropriate for the portrait. Other outdated requirements such as a single highlight in each eye, axis of eyes at an angle, no jewels, etc. are also nit-picking and have no bearing on the main purpose of a portrait: to reveal the character, the personality or even the spirit of the person. Facial expression and body language are two extremely important things to look for in a portrait. Too often judges overlook them and concentrate on composition (according to a formula) and lighting which are of secondary importance.

3.2.3

In a **formal studio portrait** lighting can be perfectly controlled but should not necessarily be too ostentatiously clever. Posing the sitter and arranging the background are also important but one should bear in mind that the individuality of the sitter should be respected and therefore it is counterproductive for the photographer to impose a preconceived arrangement that may not allow the sitter to express personality and character. Annie Liebowitz, the world's most celebrated contemporary portrait photographer has taught us that the creative collaboration of the sitter in making a portrait produces the best results. There should be a fine balance between flattery and honesty in portraiture.

3.2.4

An excellent **landscape** can be about space and it should invite the viewer in to its space. Other important elements in landscape are the use of natural light to the best effect, line, shape, form, light and dark, pattern, texture, colour harmonies and contrasts and nuances. Perspective, both linear (things getting smaller further away) and aerial (colours and tones getting paler and more bluish in the distance) emphasize depth in space and one should not complain about haze if the background is pale blue with little detail. Linear elements such as the horizon, roads, paths and rivers divide the space or lead the eye into it. Much has been said about placing the horizon on the third division but this should be changed to any division that creates a sense of harmony and seldom but not always exclude placing it halfway up the format – ask the question: “does the horizon in the middle really spoil the composition or am I just applying a rule blindly?”

3.2.

Still life or table-top photography allows for total control over composition and lighting. It is however difficult to create an excellent still life picture without some artistic flair. Selecting and arranging the objects and then lighting them is not the end of the story. Ideally the objects should be chosen because they relate to each other in terms of size, shape, colour, texture, function and whether they fit into a concept or theme. An excellent table-top picture would be aesthetically pleasing and have an underlying theme, idea or concept.

3.2.6

Nude photography is one of the most challenging genres in pictorial photography. Like table-top, the photographer can have total control over lighting and almost total control over the arrangement – the model ought also to have some creative input. A nude study can also be a portrait or it can involve a close crop of part of the body, excluding extremities – even the head. Since the liberal 1980s it is no longer obligatory to exclude nipples or pubic hair but it would be considered to be bad taste to be more specific than that – i.e. showing graphic details of genitalia. One has to accept that a nude almost always has erotic connotations – that is almost inevitably part of this genre – and there is a grey area between eroticism and pornography. The best nude photographs celebrate the beauty of the human body in all its sculptural splendor. A judge should be looking for aesthetic qualities and not marking down because of a prudish attitude.

3.2.7

If **architecture** is included in a picture there are some conventions that tend to be misapplied or over-zealously applied by some judges. For example, some judges will insist that all vertical lines must be perfectly vertical and may not be slanted. In some cases a slanting vertical can create visual tension that may or may not be problematic. One should however not feel that all slanting verticals should be straightened. For example a shot of a tall building from below looking up is characteristically distorted by perspective. This is the way things actually look in reality and there is absolutely no need to try to “correct” that. Views of building facades also need not always to be photographed from straight on; an oblique shot can work just as well and sometimes better.

3.2.8 There has been a tendency to lump any category of photography that does not fit into other specialties into pictorial. This has caused some confusion with regard to criteria. It would be better to establish an **open** category where universal photographic criteria could apply instead of the demands that the picture should be pretty or pleasant and rather be allowed to deal with disturbing or more expressive and challenging subjects.

3.3

Creative – visual art, altered reality and abstract photography

These categories are not easy to judge. Judges should take more time to judge this kind of photography, possibly also even allow limited discussion. Certainly, the old “rules of photographic composition” must fall away completely for these more recent developments. Many practiced judges have experienced difficulty when confronted by an excellent abstract image and awarded a mediocre or low score. Others have been totally bamboozled by altered reality pictures that, because of their novelty and apparent sophistication have received high awards for what amounts to the result of clicking a couple of Photoshop filter buttons.

The traditional understanding of creativity in photography is that it involves unusual techniques but this interpretation is rather superficial. Slapping a starburst filter on the lens never was a particularly creative thing to do; nor is over-sharpening, over saturation, swirl effects without an idea that has some kind of meaning or aesthetic reason.

And that is the key to understanding this kind of photography. We are looking for good ideas and good design, imagination, sensitivity, vision beyond the ordinary and a certain degree of honesty. Creative photographs can convey a mood, a feeling, a beautiful arrangement of elements; they could be expressive and can be aesthetically pleasing like a piece of instrumental music. They can be accessed through an emotional response to the shapes, lines and colours. Some can be more challenging because they do not ascribe to popular notions of beauty. Applying left-brain reasoning or formulas does not work. Judges should hesitate to award a low score for an image they don’t understand; one should rather rely more on an emotional and/or aesthetic response.

3.3.1

Abstract photography is possibly the most difficult to appreciate for anyone nurtured in a purely factual approach. Most people who struggle do so because they are trying to interpret the shapes and colours in terms of identifying recognizable objects instead of looking for the way different parts of the image relate to each other and create a special feeling or don’t, in terms of visual design, as the case may be.

3.3.2

We should not disregard some creative photographs that do not try to be beautiful but convey a more challenging message by means of **symbolism and suggestion**. Dark meanings should also be acceptable.

3.3.3

Ever since the beginning of digital manipulation there have been photographers who have delighted in the freedom to **alter reality**, either by trying to improve composition in terms of sticking to compositional formulas (intersection of thirds) or putting things together to resemble a surrealist painting by Salvador Dali. There is nothing wrong with using these digital editing techniques as such but there are also some technical requirements that too often go unchecked. Images that are made from digital cut and paste techniques and present what is intended as a realistic image should be carefully examined for accurate cutting-out, consistent lighting, and shapes of shadows, accurate perspective and colour compatibility. The free composition images that are not meant to be realistic should also be carefully put together with due regard for principles of design.

3.3.4

Visual art photography as it has recently been defined and practiced in South Africa often involves in-camera manipulations with slide film. Multiple exposures, photomontage (sandwiching two slides together), close ups with drastic cropping and zooming with a slow shutter speed are some of the techniques. There are judges who tend to try and apply “rules of composition” to these images and knock them down because they seem too busy, too simple or lack a clearly identifiable focal point. This is where a judge should have an open mind and try to see in terms of aesthetic or emotional appeal. Almost or completely blurred images sometimes also come into this category and one should be looking at subtle nuances of tone and colour, creating a mood.

3.3.5

There are also some perfectly clear “straight” photographs that are produced with artistic intentions that could be called **visual art** or **photo art**. Here one should be trying to understand the symbolic or suggested meaning rather than dismissing the obvious superficial meaning. In these photographs the concept, the idea behind the reality are important rather than formal design qualities or surface appearances. Knowledge of contemporary art may be essential for judging this type of photography.

3.3.6

Prints are judged slightly differently from projected images but the foregoing principles and criteria still apply. A good projected image however does not necessarily make a good print or vice versa. The judging of prints at salons and at club meetings usually involves displaying the print at a distance of about 2 meters in good light.

At the second stage of print judging at a salon the contenders for awards are sometimes spread on a table so the judges can look more closely, make comparisons and discuss amongst themselves which are the best pictures. Prints are expensive to produce and require more careful enhancements or even manipulations. Prints are definitely more difficult to produce than slides or images for digital projection. In addition to the normal criteria a print should also be neatly presented. The mount should be a plain, preferably neutral colour and stiff enough so the picture can be handled and displayed. Garish colours for mounts seldom work. Because a print can also be examined at close quarters it should have very good technical quality. Very small or extra large prints are generally not acceptable – anything between minimum A4 and maximum A3 is usually stipulated and the maximum dimensions of the mount should not exceed 40x50 cm. At a distance of 2 meters an A4 print is usually a bit too small for the fine detail to be seen so A3 is a better size.

4 General characteristics and appropriate criteria

4.1 Seeing the whole photograph

Various authorities on judging have stressed the need for a judge to see the whole photograph and respond to that rather than getting hooked on minor details that do not necessarily spoil the image. Except in the case of manipulated images any honest, factual photograph nearly always will include incidental details that may seem out of place. But if you approach such a photograph more as the capture of a moment in time rather than an attempt at ideal composition then these extraneous elements will take their rightful place in your priorities and be more acceptable. At the very least they can be proof that the image was not doctored. Depending on the category one could be more or less tolerant of unwanted details. If the moment is the prime consideration (“the decisive moment” – Cartier-Bresson) almost any extra details could be accepted. Sometimes those details only reveal their relevance after careful analysis of the picture.

4.2 Avoiding harping on over-valued ideas (See the article by Eddie Sethna -Opinions)

Following on from the need to see the whole picture, many of the sticking points tend to be what are called overvalued ideas *in the mind of a judge*. If a judge comes to the photograph with a template of what he thinks the photograph ought to be, he will point out rules that have been broken and add up a litany of faults that for him negate any value the picture may have. Breaking rules, especially the old-fashioned “rules of composition”, rules that are in most cases only someone’s idea of what can make a better photograph should not be a valid reason for penalizing an otherwise excellent photograph. Most of those rules are overvalued ideas; they have acquired an inflated value over time by being given the status of requirements rather than what they actually are: suggestions or recommendations or formulas for probable success. And some of them are not all that good as guidelines for good photography mainly because they stifle creativity, originality, spontaneity and lead to mediocrity and uniformity.

The official position of PSSA management for some years now has been “*there are no rules for photographic composition*”. The term “composition” as applied to photography has acquired many negative connotations because of these “rules”. Possibly a better term would be “visual design” – a less problematic term suggesting a more creative approach to photography that implies an awareness of elements and principles of design as applicable to photography.

There are many fads among judges that one could call overvalued. Things like insisting that there should always be an odd number of objects in a composition, which is possibly the most absurd of the lot. What some judges call “light traps” – areas of brightness near the edges of pictures – are also very minor intrusions that certainly should not always be reasons to downgrade a picture. They are not important enough to keep on talking about. Then there is the rather daft rule that says symmetry is only acceptable in a religious or architectural subject. Several other examples have already been mentioned above.

A judge must have a sense of what the main priorities are for any kind of photograph and have an open mind as to how those should be achieved. Harping on inconsequential and nonsensical trifles is getting the priorities the wrong way around.

4.3 Emotional response

The first sight of a new photograph triggers an immediate response for any experienced viewer. It usually is an emotional response, a sense of pleasure if the picture is good and could even still be emotional for a bad one or a disturbing subject – in that case the negative emotional response could be disappointment, disgust or horror. A mediocre or hackneyed picture may elicit a very weak or no emotional response at all. Judges should get in touch with their feelings and that initial response ought to be a major factor in the assessment of most photographs. When in doubt, go back to that emotional response.

Aesthetic pleasure is closely tied to the emotions so a particularly beautiful picture would evoke a strong emotional sense of aesthetic pleasure. After that one can look more objectively and analyze the picture in terms of specific criteria. Some excellent photographs appeal more to the intellect than the emotions, so in those cases the analysis would carry more weight.

Then there are photographs with disturbing subject matter, especially in some of the documentary categories that need to be assessed in terms of how effectively they convey their information or feeling and a judge should keep an open mind and not impose inappropriate criteria such as for pictorial photography for these pictures. Ugly or sad subjects can also be powerful photographs that can stir the emotions very effectively. In these cases one should be looking for the strength or degree of the emotion evoked – and this *need not necessarily be a pleasant emotion*.

4.4 Impact and subtlety

In some judging situations where there is pressure on judges to give an instant assessment, there is a tendency for images that have strong impact to be favoured above those that are more subtle. This tendency results in an unwarranted emphasis on impact and sometimes a total disregard for subtlety. Amateur photographers have been conditioned to this prejudice and mostly strive to produce images that have the required amount of impact – and maybe not much else. This results in a simplistic and skewed idea of what photography is about and trivializes amateur photography.

Judges should try to see more in a photograph than mere impact. That is not to say that impact is a bad characteristic; only that it should not be the only consideration, above other less obvious and possibly more valuable attributes.

4.5 Personal taste

Personal taste is conditioned by upbringing, education and experience. People from different backgrounds usually have different tastes when it comes to anything with aesthetic qualities and that includes photography. Problematic taste is when a person likes only one very specific type of photography to the exclusion of most other types. Anyone who has such exclusive taste cannot be a good judge of photography. Such people cannot have their taste changed or broadened by persuasion. No-one can win an argument about taste; it is a very personal thing. As education and experience do play a role in developing one's taste, exposure to examples of good photography together with sufficient background information can broaden anyone's taste to some extent.

A person who has good background knowledge of many different kinds of photography does not necessarily like all those different kinds equally. Everyone has personal preferences and as a judge one should try as hard as possible to set those preferences aside.

4.6 Salon judging

In some respects salon judging is easier than club judging mainly because one is not required to comment on the photographs. On the other hand it can be demanding in terms of the need to get through hundreds of photographs in a relatively short time – and sadly, in this situation, impact reigns supreme and subtlety loses out. Keeping a consistent standard from the first picture, through all the others in the middle and up to the last is difficult.

Judging experience counts for a lot in this situation as does a clear understanding of the criteria and section definitions. Every salon director is obliged to publish these definitions in the salon program that is sent out to judges and contestants some weeks before the closing date. Judges must be meticulous in applying the requirements of those definitions and if a photograph is disqualified because it does not fit the section the decision must be unanimous and the reason must be clear.

Being a salon judge is an awesome responsibility. Together with co-judges one is in a position to establish or maintain a standard for amateur photography either in Southern Africa or internationally. To be invited to judge for a salon means that your peers respect your judgment and trust you to be scrupulously fair. Anyone with a particular axe to grind ought not to judge for a salon or for that matter even at a club. Judges for international salons must be particularly well qualified. It is too easy to dismiss some kinds of photography or styles that are unfamiliar because of ignorance or inexperience on the part of the judge. Judges should affirm good international photography and not only the photographs that mimic local styles. Foreign entrants (and even local ones) can present a local judge with a highly original and unconventional interpretation of a particular category that may be difficult to appreciate or evaluate at first glance. The best advice here is to take a second look and try to understand what the photographer's intention may have been before dismissing it as out of court. And bear in mind that marking down an excellent foreign photograph merely because it is out of the ordinary can reflect on the reputation of judges and photography in Southern Africa. International photography of a high standard that is exhibited in this region is a very important positive influence on local styles and standards.

For most salons only a relatively small percentage of entries achieve acceptance and an even smaller number receive awards. That means that most entrants, especially the total rejects, are going to be disappointed. One could say "well that is just part of the game – winners and losers". Some salon judges feel that they must be over-strict for salon judging as opposed to club judging. How strict the judges are makes no difference to the statistics in terms of the acceptance cut-off point. The top 25 to 30 % for national and up to 35% for international are accepted whatever the scores; the best photographs are usually selected by comparison from among the highest scores. If the cut-off is placed at 11 or 10 (or even 9 for particularly strict judges) it is immaterial – the same number of award winners and acceptances will be selected. The intangible result may not necessarily

5.9 Mood

Photographers often talk of mood when in fact what they really are referring to is a colour cast. An overall colour harmony or colour theme can however go a long way to creating a mood. The important attribute of mood is that it is an emotional rather than a technical thing. The mood of a picture should rather really be understood as its emotional content and that can be influenced by many more things than just a colour cast. The mood of a picture often communicates at an unconscious rather than a conscious level. It is not something you can analyze with cold logic.

5.10 Feeling

It can be argued that in all art forms feeling is the most important thing to communicate. One must have sensitivity to appreciate feeling. It involves empathy with the subject and maybe also with the photographer.

Picking up feeling from a photograph is a special talent that some people do not have and maybe they should not judge photography. Like mood, feeling is a subliminal part of content. The photographer must of course have captured a feeling for anyone to pick it up. It is a mysterious, mostly un-nameable, even spiritual quality that cannot be adequately explained; it is the x-factor in excellent photography.

When a picture that in every other respect is excellent, perfect lighting, perfect makeup, perfect hair, perfect pose – and maybe even good enough for the cover of a magazine – and there still seems to be something wrong: it is the feeling. This often occurs with professional photographers and professional models, who are merely fulfilling the editor's brief but just don't get the right feeling in any of the shots. And in many cases you can't put your finger on exactly why that is so.

MEETINGS

October 2020

Set Subject

Judge : Commenting

Judges : Panel

Competition Results

Cape Town/My Hometown

Cathy Bruce

Club Members : Marelize Wessels, Michele Moss, Riël Tredoux



1st Place : Bernard Seymour Hall : **Glorious Table Bay** : 25 Points : PDI Set



2nd Place : Bernard Seymour Hall : **Working in Silos** : 24 Points : PDI Open



3rd Place : Peter Dewar : **Te Anau Morn** : 24 Points : PDI Open