

# Guidelines for the Camera Club of Oak Ridge Salon Judges

Judging photography is a subjective process. A diverse group of judges with differing backgrounds and interests, both photographically and otherwise, provides balance. We don't want judges who all think alike. Measuring against standards of quality brings objectivity to the process. A judge's goal is to give the maker the highest score possible commensurate with defined standards of quality. The Camera Club of Oak Ridge defines levels of quality this way.

10	EXCEPTIONAL:	A truly striking image that could be competitive in just about any competition anywhere. The image displays elements of distinctiveness or originality in conception and/or execution.
9	SUPERIOR:	High impact image with consistently high level of achievement in all technical and aesthetic elements.
8	EXCELLENT:	High impact and levels of achievement in nearly all of the technical and aesthetic elements
7	MERITORIOUS:	A very good image with good execution across most technical and aesthetic elements. Positives far outweigh imperfections.
6	ABOVE AVERAGE:	Good impact and execution with few technical flaws.
5	GOOD:	Competent image with no glaring technical flaws, but lacks impact or interest that would garner a higher score.
4	ACCEPTABLE:	Ordinary image, subject and/or mundane approach, and technical flaws do not overwhelm the image.
3	NOT FOR EXHIBITION:	Image has overriding technical flaws or strongly lacks subject-matter or compositional interest.

## Specific Criteria to Assist in Judging

**Impact:** When the image appears, does it have immediate impact and evoke an emotional response? Color, texture, and pattern create impact as does quality and placement of light. Does the image have a wow! factor or another feature that makes it singular? Images that make an immediate or strong artistic impression should be scored more favorably.

**Composition:** Elements of composition (line, form, shape, tone, color) work together to reinforce the photographer's statement. Good composition creates an image not apparent to the casual observer. It leads the viewer's eye through the image, intentionally directing it as the maker intends. Traditional compositional approaches in photography are guidelines, not rules; creative deviations may carry the message better in some instances. There is more to art than the rule of thirds!

**Creativity and Story Telling:** Creativity of expression, or work that is unusual, experimental or new captures our attention. Does the image clearly tell a story, raise questions or create mystery? Did the photographer capture a unique moment in time? The photographer's vision – even if mysterious – should be evident.

**Technical Execution:** The image demonstrates a high level of technical skill in choices of camera settings, in lighting, in viewing angle and in post-production of the photographic image. Techniques such as grain, soft focus, subtle lighting, limited depth of field, etc., if used, can enhance the image. The image avoids the significant presence of undesirable artifacts such as unwanted color casts, distracting edges or backgrounds, blown out or blocked up areas, clone tracks, over-sharpening, sensor dust spots, muddy or milky areas and the like.

During each round, each image will be shown twice. The first time is designed to give the judges a sense of the overall category and to see the entire field of entries. The second viewing is when we ask you to judge the image and assign a numerical score. In reviewing each image we ask that you:

- Respectfully consider each maker as a committed photographer who is determined to grow and improve his/her work.
- Judge each image in and of itself. Until it is time to choose the final winners, do not compare it to the other images in this competition. Don't assume you know who the maker is.
- Be receptive to many styles. In today's world, post-camera development, special development software and other effects are important aspects of photographic skills. Reward a creative approach when it produces a distinctive image, creates impact and is skillfully done.
- When the image first appears, take some time to absorb the impact and form an overall emotional impression of the image. Quickly articulate to yourself what is done well and then assign a tentative mental score based on that initial reaction.
- Only then, judge for technical flaws and poor workmanship (e.g. bad exposure, out-of-focus subject, poor lighting, poor

print quality, obvious retouching or untidy presentation). Don't over-penalize for minor flaws, but use definite shortcomings to adjust the score you originally assigned, if need be.

- Once all the images in a category have been scored, the scorekeepers determine the top scoring half-dozen or so images. These top images are then shown together a third time for the judges' review. *Image-makers and audience members learn when judges discuss the pros and cons of an image. Each judge each encouraged to comment on the pros and cons of the various top-scoring images.* Being an outlier can be a very important thing when you can articulate your position and feelings about the image effectively, so don't hesitate to assess an image differently from your colleagues.
- Once the commentary and re-assessment are done the judges then mutually determine the winner of First, Second, Third and, if there are a sufficient number of entries, Honorable Mentions.