

# THE GRAND RAPIDS CAMERA CLUB JUDGING GUIDELINES

## A. SCORING CRITERIA

**Judges may score from 6 - 15**

15) A judge's highest score. A fifteen is an image of highest quality in all technical and compositional respects, with impact. Impact is exhibited when a photograph is striking and has an *immediate* and *strong* effect on those viewing it.

14) The image is better than the previous score of 13, but not quite a 15.

13) The image is better than a score of 12 (above average)

12) An above average image. The image is excellently lighted and superbly composed with no noticeable technical flaws in such things as focus, slanted horizons, distracting backgrounds or empty foregrounds. All elements of the image work together.

11) The image is better than the previous score of 10, but not quite a 12.

10) The image is better than a score of 9 (average).

9) An average image. This image is properly exposed, correctly focused and has good composition. It is acceptable, but does not generate any special interest or stir emotions. Technical flaws are not immediately obvious.

8) Some technical flaws are apparent in the image. Image is not sharp, has crooked horizons, over or underexposed, etc.

7) The image is better than a score of 6 although still shows significant technical flaws.

6) A well below average image. This image exhibits several technical flaws in such areas as exposure, focus and composition. An extremely poor image.

Judges should contact the VP of Competition if they feel the image does not meet the category criteria for judging. The other judges will be contacted by email to discuss the issue. A minimum of two judges and the

VP of Competition must agree before the image can be disqualified. If an image is disqualified, it may be re-entered as an additional image in the following month's competition in the appropriate category.

A judge shall leave the score blank on the Judge's Scoresheet if the image is their own or that of an immediate family member. The other two judge's scores will then be averaged to determine the point value to be assigned to the image. If the maker of the image is known to the judge, he/she should score the image fairly and appropriately. Do not leave the score blank.

Once all judges scores are received, if there are more than 3 scoring points between the low and high scores, (8-12, 9-13, 10-14, 11-15 etc.) the judges will be contacted for a discussion. This is usually done via email. The judges will then have the option to change their score if they feel appropriate.

Scoring is used to separate competition entries into groups of similar quality, thus allowing honors to be given, and standings to be defined. The judging process, however, is more than just scoring honors. It provides a maker with feedback as to how successfully he or she may have been in creating a striking image. While the numerical score does provide some feedback to a maker, a score should not be considered to be a definitive evaluation of photographer's work. It is simply our judge's perspective of the image at that particular time.

## **B. CATEGORIES**

**ASSIGNED:** The Grand Rapids Camera Club board members select a subject for each month of the competition year as the "assigned" subject. The assigned category is designed to challenge a member's photographic skills and to encourage them to photograph images that they may not have normally. A member should be rewarded for a fresh and creative approach to the assigned subject. As a judge, how well it fits the assignment should be your 1<sup>st</sup> consideration. Remember that the subject must be the dominant feature. Next a judge shall evaluate the quality of the image as indicated in our scoring criteria. An image that shows the assigned subject as the primary subject of the image, is done creatively, and is above average with no technical flaws should receive a high score. On the contrary, a member should NOT be given a high score regardless of the quality of the image if it

doesn't fit the assigned category. Manipulations are permitted, with the exception of AI generated images, which must be entered in the creative category, Manipulations would not be appropriate if the assigned subject specifically calls for the image to be captured and submitted as a nature, photojournalism or scapes image within the assigned category.

**CREATIVE:** The creative category is for manipulated and enhanced images and those where the maker's creativity comes into view in the final image. Images entered should be unique and different, perhaps out of the ordinary. A photographer's creativity can either be in how the photo is taken or that the final image is created using Photoshop or other image editing software. In the Creative Category a judge's main criteria for scoring is in how well the photographer shows his creativeness and skill in creating the final image. If the image is entered in the creative category, but does not illustrate anything particularly creative, a judge shall give it a lower score even if it is a great image in its own right. This category is meant to be scored 1<sup>st</sup> and foremost on its creativity. All AI generated images must be entered in this category.

**OPEN:** All images, regardless of the subject matter or technique are eligible in the Open category, with the exception of AI generated images, which must be entered in the Creative Category. A judge shall evaluate the quality based on proper composition, exposure, and sharpness of the image as indicated in our scoring criteria.

**MONOCHROME:** As with Open, all images are eligible in the Monochrome category, with the exception of AI generated images, which must be entered in the Creative category. Monochrome is defined as black and white or varying tones of only *one* color. A judge should look for proper composition, exposure, and sharpness without technical flaws. In addition, it should display good tonal range within the image.

**NATURE:** Any image that is presented in a manner that does NOT depict the influence of human habitation (the hand of man). This category includes such subjects as botany, zoology, geology, etc. The addition of an element that portrays the subject's natural habitat is acceptable. Examples would include a shore bird on a piling, robin in a lawn, or a barn swallow in a barn. Subjects that do NOT qualify include domestic animals, horticultural varieties of plants or hybrid plants. This definition does not limit nature photography to wildlife subjects. Landscapes and shots taken at the zoo or nature centers are also acceptable, keeping in mind that they shall not

show the hand of man. Landscapes can now also be entered in the “Scapes” category. Either is acceptable. General enhancement of images in the Nature category is allowed. Manipulation (adding or removing elements that changes what was seen in nature) is not allowed. If a member enters an image in the Nature category representing something that is not normally present in nature or where the image is visibly manipulated, a judge shall call for a discussion, notifying the VP of Competition by email. Extremely oversaturated and overworked images are not normal in nature and should also generate a discussion among the judges. It is a judge’s responsibility to make decisions to disqualify an image in question fairly and without prejudice. If in doubt, the image should be scored as presented. A judge should look for proper composition, exposure, and sharpness without technical flaws. AI generated images are not allowed in nature and must be entered in the Creative Category.

**PHOTOJOURNALISM:** This type of picture tells or illustrates a story, such as those used in the news media and periodicals. Photojournalism includes subject matter such as spot news, sports and documentaries. Human Interest within the PJ category depicts humans in an emotional, interactive or unusual situation.

A judge’s 1<sup>st</sup> consideration should be in how well its story is presented to its viewers. If the entry does not tell a story as it’s presented it should be given a lower score. An image that tells a great story and is good technically should be rewarded with a great score. Any technique or digital manipulation that tends to deprive the picture of its spontaneity should be avoided. Minor enhancements are allowed. Manipulation (adding or removing elements that change the story of the image) is not allowed. AI generated images are not allowed in PJ and must be entered in the Creative Category.

**PORTRAITURE:** This category is for *human* portraiture. Any photograph of a male or female, regardless of age, could be considered. Although it would usually be a head and shoulders or an above the waist photograph, the entire human form can be included. The definition of portrait in the dictionary is “an image of a person in which the face and its expression are predominant.” Both portraits taken in a studio and outdoor environmental portraits are welcomed. When judging a portrait, a judge shall look for pleasing skin tones, good lighting, sharpness, composition, background and how the subject is posed. At times a portrait is presented as soft focus by the photographer and shall be judged as such. Studio portraits and some environmental portraits will show a “catchlight” in the eye when done

properly. AI generated images are not allowed in the Portraits and must be entered in the Creative category.

**SCAPES:** A landscape is defined as a wide or extensive view of a scene or scenery. It refers to all the visible features of an area of land, often considered in terms of aesthetic appeal. Many landscapes show little or no human activity, instead featuring subjects such as strongly defined landforms, weather, and ambient light. As with most forms of art, the definition is broad, and may include urban settings (cityscapes), seascapes or waterscapes. It is about the overall view, a place, not an object, person or animal, although they can be present in the image. It becomes something else when the dominant part of the image is the object rather than the scenery. Scapes should be judged based on the overall quality of the image and how well it fits the category. Computer manipulations, adding elements not originally in the scene and/or changing the image is not allowed. AI generated images are not allowed in Scapes and must be entered in the Creative Category.

## C. GRCC POLICY REGARDING AI GENERATED IMAGES

AI – Artificial Intelligence refers to an image generated by the use of an AI application or software combining computer science and large databases which enable images to be created artificially.

AI-based tools can also be used to enhance and augment photos which is available in most editing software. These tools that are used to refine your image, such as noise reduction, sharpening and to facilitate selections for editing masks are permitted in all categories.

For this purpose, we are referring to the use of AI software, that CREATES or GENERATES images artificially based on keywords and/or other input, which we will refer to as AI.

THE GRAND RAPIDS CAMERA CLUB is a photography club and staying true to our more than 100 Year history - we are not an art association open to digital media produced by use of a computer program's interpretation or input. Therefore, the images submitted, even in creative/altered reality, must originate as photographs made by the submitting member. Images entirely created through AI generative software are digital art. They are not captured with a light sensitive device (camera) and therefore will not be accepted for competition in Grand Rapids Camera Club.

a. The GRCC will accept submissions containing AI generated imagery in competition as long as the main subject of the finished image originated as a photograph made by the submitting member.

b. Such competition submissions which contain AI generated imagery will be allowed **ONLY** in the Creative Category. Entry in other categories (Assigned, Photojournalism, Monochrome, Open, Nature, Portraits or Scapes will be subject to disqualification, even if they otherwise would fit the category.

c. Judges could call for an AI related discussion for two reasons 1) that an AI created images has been entered in a category other than creative or 2) that the main subject of an AI image submitted in creative does not appear to originate from a photograph (as defined above). The Vice President of Competition may request the competitor to provide the original image. This is to ensure that an image is not disqualified unfairly.

d. The use of AI image refinement/enhancement tools to refine your image such as noise reduction, sharpening, masks, etc. shall be allowed.

e. Images generated entirely with the use of AI software without the inclusion of your photographed image as its subject will not be accepted in GRCC Competition.

## **D. DIVISIONS**

**DIGITAL:** Entries should have impact, a strong center of interest and a background that does not distract from the main subject. Not all are going to have all the desired qualities of perfect technique and composition. Proper exposure is critical. Detail should be seen in both shadow and highlight areas unless it is evident that the photographer's intent is to the contrary. Examples would be soft focus or low and high key images. Since complete control is possible with digital images, consider the following additional points:

- Although digital images are not matted and mounted, if a mat or decorative or artistic border is included in the image, that treatment should also be considered when scoring the image.

- Post-capture enhancements and manipulation must also be considered when scoring digital images. They should be done carefully, the skill in using them should be considered in scoring the image. These treatments should not distract or detract from the image itself.

**PRINTS:** Remember that only the very best of images should be made into prints. The same guidelines that apply to digital should be applied to prints with the following additional considerations:

- In monochrome prints, look for good tonal range and shadow detail.
- In color prints, look for detail in highlight areas, unless it is evident that the photographer's intent is to the contrary. Examples would be soft focus or low and high key images.



## E. THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN EVALUATING IMAGES

- **IMPACT:** Viewing an image for the 1<sup>st</sup> time evokes some kind of feeling. The image is striking and has an immediate and strong effect on those viewing it.
- **TECHNICAL EXCELLANCE:** The quality of the image presented for viewing. This includes sharpness, exposure, color corrections etc.
- **STORY TELLING:** What does the image evoke in the viewers imagination?
- **SUBJECT MATTER:** Even though it lacks words, the image tells a story and the subject matter is central to that.
- **CREATIVITY:** It shows imagination and how the image is used to convey an idea, message or thought.
- **STYLE:** When subject matter and style come together in an appropriate manner, the effects on an image can be spectacular.
- **COMPOSITION:** When all the visual elements of an image come together to express intent, that's when the magic of composition happens. Good composition captures a viewer's attention and directs it where the artist wants it to be.
- **COLOR BALANCE:** Proper color balance can bring a sense of harmony to an image. When the tones all work together to support an image, the emotional appeal is that much greater.
- **CENTER OF INTEREST:** This is where the creator wants his viewer's attention focused.
- **LIGHTING:** The use and control of light has an effect on every aspect of an image. It informs dimensions and shape; it sets tone and mood.
- **TECHNIQUE:** How one chooses to execute the image. Technique informs everything in the creation of the image from lighting to posing to printing and to presentation. It shows all the techniques mastered and applied to the craft.



## A SYNOPSIS FOR JUDGES

*A Judge should . . . . .*

- Be open to freshness and new vision, and not assume that the only successful competition images are those which fit a certain time-honored mold. He or she should be willing to recognize those photographers who bring new life, spirit and vision to an age-old craft and thus to the organization as a whole.
- Be consistent, decisive, upbeat, and positive.
- Be willing to reward both freshness and creativity along with technical excellence.
- Be receptive to all images. Strive to remove personal bias and not unduly favor or penalize images based upon their subject matter, the difficulty of the shot, or knowledge of the maker.
- Apply scores consistently so that all images given a certain score can be expected to be of comparable quality. He/she should not succumb to the temptation of changing his/her standards midstream. No matter whether individual judges' scores as a whole are perceived by the audience and "high" or "low" the consistency is perceived as fairness.
- Use the entire scoring scale effectively to differentiate images.
- Be sensitive to a maker's feelings but the judge must still be honest. A judge giving inflated "feel good" scores should realize that his or her unwillingness to give the low score that is deserved often results in the deflation of another maker whose work truly deserved the higher score. That maker is now having his or her work placed in the same category as a decidedly worse image. True learning does not come from false complements, but honest appraisals. An image should be scored a score of 8 or lower if it exhibits technical flaws, such as obvious over or under exposure, is out of focus or shows very poor composition.