

FCC WORKSHOP PROGRAM
for the education and training of camera club judges
prepared by
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Background

The program proposed is a radical departure from the workshops offered in the past. The program has the endorsement of the FCC Executive.

The program pursues a deliberate strategy involving a coherent and conceptually rigorous approach to image appraisal. Because it is conceptual in structure, based on well-established principles of adult education, the program has the potential to be a change mechanism for the camera club movement.

The FCC will find opposition to what is proposed for no other reason than it is a departure. Traditionalists and conservatives will be threatened by it what is proposed. However, the FCC has no real choice but to respond to the exigencies of change within the discipline of photography itself and a new generation of membership, seeking from the FCC, leadership that is committed to the developmental of a vibrant photographic culture. If any institution does not constantly pursue revitalisation and renewal, it will perish. The workshop schema outlined here provides but one mechanism for renewal of the FCC using the judging and related competition system as the means.

Rationale

Judging of any photographic work within the formality of a competition should have as its central feature the fostering of creativity. No more and no less.

Within photography creativity is a total, uncompromising commitment to encouraging, rewarding and facilitating innovation, experimentation and the visual communication of ideas through diverse, provocative and profoundly evocative approaches to the making of imagery.

Currently the dominant, unifying visual culture of the camera club is geared to presenting work that is acceptable, that complies with normative principles judges communicate as desirable. This is antithetical to creativity. It destroys it save for those folk who do not take it seriously or abandon the process and move on. Either outcome means the judging process has failed.

Following what judges desire leads to uniformity, conformity, to the use of conservative or “safe” approaches best exemplified by the pictorialism of the 1890’s to 1950’s, and long abandoned by most contemporary photography artists and professional practitioners. At club level following the judge leads to such aberrant and destructive practices as:

- Submitting a “successful” image in a variety of media - print, slide, electronic form so as to maximise “rewards”
- Targeting a judge where his/her “likes and dislikes” are known
- Using the same image serially across a number of clubs and related competitions
- Doing the same style of work year in and year out because one is good at it as measured by club success.

Judge-hunting, club-hopping and image recycling are hardly conducive to growth.

In accepting this education and training framework the FCC has signalled it seeks to progressively introduce a new judging culture that celebrates the image for its creativity and innovation and values the worker as well as the work. . Accordingly, it intends to promote within its ranks of judges a priority to recognize, reward, and endorse creativity as central to image making. Innovation is to be prized, conformity to be discouraged.

The contemporary world of photography has liberated image making from the phobic allure of technology, the cant and mystery of pseudo-scientific “how to” texts and workshops. The camera club members ought to

feel that now, more than ever, they are involved in one of the most vibrant, exciting and liberating of media; they should feel free to explore, to invest, to use, to express and communicate. Technology has liberated them and the judging process should not stifle this.

In photography, there is always a place to document, to record, to make, own and enjoy visual records of one's life journey. Importantly, it is assumed in the judges workshop program that follows that the FCC, its clubs and members seek to move photography beyond recording one's life journey to exploring its mystery, its meaning, its significance, its relevance, its complexity, its beauty, its challenges, its forces, its competing ideologies, philosophies, fantasies, themes and dreams. The latter are sources of ideas that trigger an adventure that takes one into the realm of art making, where the photographer is in control, not the judge. That is, the photographer is liberated from all constraints including those wittingly or unwittingly imposed by the culture of conformity that judging has encouraged.

Photo documentation, travel photography, pictorialism and making image records, delightful past times as they may be, represent but one side of a coin. The full value of that coin will never be realized unless judges accept the privilege and the responsibility to constantly alert folk to the "other side"- to art making with its rich rewards that far exceed any approval or endorsement they might offer. The workshop scheme therefore seeks to tease out the gulf between:

- **taking** photographs and **making** images.
- the **literal** photographic statement and the **expressive** image
- the visual records we make of what we **see** and the expressive statements about what we **think**.

The workshop program advocated below is but ONE way of broadening the visual and image making culture of the camera club movement. This change process cannot be successful without judges sensitive to their role as "educators", if for no other reason, than many FCC members will see what a judge says, endorses and encourages will be perceived as "right", as acceptable, desirable to be emulated. It behoves the judge, therefore, to be in tune with mainstream contemporary debates about the medium of photography and its power as a means for creative exchange between author and viewer and to appreciate their task is more about fostering thinking, seeing and innovation than it is about rewarding an image they happen to like. What a judge "likes" is irrelevant to the growth of the individual. What makes a judge relevant is what they can see, value, recognize and encourage within each worker irrespective of whether that person is a beginner or experienced photographer.

What is proposed is new and it is untested within the camera club environment. It has worked well elsewhere. It is a proposal based on sound educational principles and is based on a conceptual framework that identifies the process and product domains of the making of an image. That framework is summarised diagrammatically in Attachment 1.

This framework is the basis – the structure of the workshop program.

There are many such conceptual approaches. This one is but a starting point and has the merit of ensuring that it is different, novel and focussed to begin the long process of changing the culture of judging from one that is "instrumental", one that encourages convergence to one that is a celebration of creativity and promotes and rewards divergence.

The proposal is consistent with best practice in other areas of creative expression.

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