

Critiquing the Photograph

Light: Is the use of light effective? Does it complement, describe, contrasted the subject or mood? Does the photographer control the lighting or does it look out of control and inappropriate for the image? Is the light in a descriptive photograph printed to look and feel like the corresponding light during a particular time of day, year or geographic location?

Depth of field: Was the correct effect, from shallow to deep, utilized to compress or expand space to help us better see the point of the image?

Framing: Does the photographer use the edges of the image well, or is subject dominant to the point that the edges are visually inert?

Composition: Is there an effective arrangement of shapes, is depth created or denied? Does the environment contrast/combine effectively with the subject?

Print scale: Is the image size appropriate for the subject matter and general level of technique employed by the photographer?

Contrast and tonal value: Does the image possess contrast which is evidence of darkroom skill and proper exposure? And is it appropriate for the subject matter? Are the full range of tonal values present and do the silver mid-tones glow rather than appear leaden or concrete gray?

Sharpness and grain: Is the image free of camera shake and bad focusing unless they are clearly intentional? Is soft focus technique used to an advantage? Is the grain tight or does it look like golf balls?

Camera angle: Is it varied and does it serve the composition?

Tonal color: Some papers are warm toned, some cold toned, some with various colors. Do those tonal variations appear to be under control and appropriate to the subject?

Symbols: Does the photographer correctly and effectively use cultural symbols in the work?

Believability: Do you believe the image, the mood and the setting?

Print cleanliness: Is there an absence of distracting highlights and black holes? Is there a glaring error within the photograph? Does the photographer have control and patience to do all the burning and dodging to make the composition work?

Are we seeing a work which reflects care and intelligence and not some random careless shooting? Does the work have something to say?