

Analyzing the Objectivity of Photography Judging

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Abstract

The objectivity of Photo-Judging is highly sought and tried to maintain by many organizations and participants of a photo-contest. This research focused on analyzing the entrance qualifications, judging criteria, and procedure. The results showed that the objectivity of photo-judging can be approached and retained by followings:

(a) The participants' experience of photography, the category of photography, and the subject of contest should be based on a same level;

(b) The judging criteria should be based on the relevance and validity of the photograph content, such as subject, concept, visual composition, and photo-technique;

(c) The judging procedure should be based on compound judging, judging-rejudging, grading, judge recruitment, multiple judging, and comparison.

The photographic contest judge needs to pursue the professional growth to be able to appreciate and evaluate the diversity of photography style and performance. Meanwhile, the judge should also keep objective for accepting the versatility and changeability of idea and concept.

*Keywords: Closed Photography Judging, Judging Criteria, Judging
Procedure, Judging Expertise Introduction*

Photography is an art of seeing and full of subjectivity. How to see, interpret, and take pictures is individually different, because art is so called subjective (Sadler, 1995). Following the same thought, to judge somebody's photographs is also individual different and subjective.

When we seriously take a good look at somebody's work, based on the purpose and criterion, this scrutiny activity can become to judge, compare, criticize, evaluate, and appreciate. Some researchers focused on evaluating a single art work or -series by analyzing, comparing, interpreting, and judging four steps (Hwang, 1999; Feldman, 1967, 1994; Prater, 2002). Such evaluation and judging activities have the purpose to enhance student's learning – and teacher's instruction effectiveness. In order to achieve this goal, such activities need to put into a systematic standard and procedure (Hwang, 1999; Su, 1995; Geahigan, 1998; Howell, 2000; Mathew, 2005). However, photography judging, comparing, criticizing, and evaluating are subtly different. The first three are not for the art work maker itself, but for others, and sometimes need to give grade just like the teachers. These three activities need to follow the objective and fair judging criteria and more oriented to the teaching and the judging activities. Actually, judging, comparing, and criticizing possess more authority. But evaluating and appreciating are more personalized oriented more for both personal work and other's work. For the creator of the art work, evaluating is more tended to learn how to improve one's work, or to make sure if the work is appropriate to exhibit. To other audience, evaluating is to make sense of that work and to see if there is some where to learn or to bypass. Therefore, evaluating and appreciating are more learning oriented as well as more subjective than judging, comparing, and criticizing.

However, can we state that judging, comparing, and criticizing are free of subjectivity? The answer will be: Not for sure. Some judges would say: I just like the photograph, maybe the lighting, technique or even composition is not really perfect. Other might say: I don't care

the perfection of composition and technique in this picture; I just don't like the photograph. The result of the judging is often depended on individual's view (Benton, 1993). Even Ken Bizzigotti, the director of national journalist photographer association U. S., deemed a good photograph to if it was to catch eye in the first sight, not to give quantitative grading (site from Zibluk, 1999). As a whole, the result of judging can be unfair because of some possible subjectivity by judges. Sometimes, the result also impedes many practitioners' eagerness to make good photograph. Thus, to keep objective is an important task and virtue for the judge.

How to keep the justice and objectivity of the photography judging? After analyzing the issue, the judge, the contestant, the contest organization, and the learning organization like school or photography department, and photography club will have the image of the function, procedure, and attitude of the photography judging. In the beginning, the discussion will focus on the function and structure of a photography judging. And then, what can the contestant get from the judging result?

Delimitation of Research

There are three occasions where need photography judging: (a) formal photography contest, (b) interpretation article on the photography magazine, and (c) feedback in the photography class. In the formal photography contest, the judge panel consisting of several photography experts will select works from all contestants. In the photography class, there would be only one judge, namely the teacher. In differentiation with photography contest, the interpretation article and feedback in the class can be seen as learning activities, the teacher or expert use the interpretation to provide criteria for improving students' photographic performance. However, such criteria are provided by only one expert or teacher, who often shows lacking of objectivity, although this teacher may use quantative analysis and comparison to maintain the objectivity.

The formal photography contest, in the contrast, is a kind of closed judging. The panel experts do not need to face the contestant. Rather they grade or rank the works based on the evaluation criteria issued by the contest organization. The experts do not interpret.

The contestant will probably receive the notice from the contest organization by mail, phone or in the website to acquire if he won or not. The contestant also does not know why is not been chosen. He can only assume to get improvement from those winning works in website or exhibition. This closed judging does not provide a direct feedback but establish criteria for contestant to follow by publishing the winning works. Indirectly, the closed judging does achieve educational goal and is more influential than activities in the class because of its publicity. Thus, it needs more just and objective. This research is limited at the closed photography judging.

Purpose of Research

Regardless of closed judging or opened judging, the purpose of judging is to pick the better work for exhibiting, publishing, and awarding. The function of a contest is to provide an aesthetic criterion for interested people to improve and learn. Thus, the duty of a judge lies not on promoting personal concept and aesthetics, not on building personal reputation, and definitely not on repelling something or somebody that has a confronted view to the judge himself. (Chang, 2006; May, 1992; Preston, 2002).

Maybe we should have the thought of how the contestants see the contest and judging. And what can they get from the contest and judging. Normally, a photography contest will provide some monetary incentive, chance to exhibit, or a formal recognition like medal and title. Except these three impetuses, to take part in such formal contest will first of all make someone feel inspired. Secondly, contestants hope their work can be recognized. Some contestants may use such opportunity to learn where to improve. Also, some may want to experience the happiness of sharing (McInnes, 1993). These four inward encouragements are the impetus for contestant to join the photography contest. The judge also keep in mind of providing the contestant positive information, meeting the need of contestant, enhancing the interest to be engaged in the contest, and most importantly, need to be cautious not to impede the contestants' willingness of sharing and not to stifle the desire of contestants to be creative (Mueller, 1988; Preston, 2001; Sadler, 1995).

Thus, the purpose of the research is to analyze and discuss the justice and objectivity of the photography judging based on viewpoints of judge and contestant, as well as a systematic criterion and procedure.

Judging Criteria and System

By discussing the judging criteria and system, we need to make a better picture about how these criteria been set, and for whom and what are they been set. Popham (2000) in his book, *Modern Educational Measurement*, stated that the purpose of educational measurement is "to improve student learning" (p.1). He continued to talk about how to measure, what to measure, when to measure, to whom to measure, and how to know the measurement is reliable and faithful.

In fact, the most important thing of those measurements is what to measure, to measure the learning effectiveness? Which subject of effectiveness to measure? Maybe the learning attitude? To which subject the attitude to measure? For example, in this research, the photography judging should measure or evaluate the strength and weakness of the photographic work. But what kind of photographic work? Is the work to be categorized? Is the subject of works limited in certain area? How about the entrain level of the workers? We cannot put works from both novice and experienced photographer and to judge their photographic technical performance. Maybe we could only measure the differences of the creativity, because the creativity cannot be categorized to limit to novice or experienced photographer, because even a little child can be amazingly creative.

Certainly, we cannot also put different kinds of photographs together to judge and to grade. For example, to compare the photograph of a butterfly and a street report is inappropriate, because their attributions are different. Their aesthetics are different, their work situations are different, even their styles and functions are different. So many differences not only lead the judging result unfair and unjust, but basically it is very difficult to compare. They lie not at a same fundamental and cannot be judged by a same criterion. Thus, before going to examine the reliability of the judging method and the validity

of the content, or talking about the justice and fairness, a basic level of the similar category need first to be set, and the judging system can then be established. May (1992) also emphasized that making the purpose of the contest clear will help to build the outline for following during the judging procedure

What is the same fundamental of the contestant works? Bernstein (1985) proposed that the judging or evaluating an art work is quite subjective. Subjectivity is the nature of aesthetic appreciation. To set the evaluation standard, which is just and fair, is achieved by “pleasing the most of people most of the time” (p. 54). The suggestion of Bernstein is quite reasonable and practical. Because art is subjective, when we are taking about setting judging criteria, it can only refer to that certain organization, which is in charge of the photography contest, including photography class and/or club. And the members in the organization are willing to follow those criteria. Take a practical example, before the F/64 photographic group was built, the members in the group believed photography should keep its simplicity, should not mix with form and material of other media. Technically, picture should keep total clear through shrinking the aperture to the minimum of f/64. Until now, although the group has been dismissed for a long time, some followings do keep the criteria for their photographic work, sharp photograph with full of rendition by mature photography and darkroom techniques (Judging Photograph, 2005).

Building Fundamental (Photography Category and Classification)

First, the same fundamental need most of member in the photography group agreed and built. And then we can start to set the judging criteria for the entire member to follow. Explicitly, different category and type can be seen as different fundamental. Aforementioned example, F/64 group is the *Straight Photography* or *Purist*. There are many more categorizations in the photography. As well as the different types of photography can be categorized by its motive, form, function, sometimes, the way of record of the photograph (please refers to Table 1). Such as black and white, color, positive and print, large format or small format, and digital image. Sometimes, the type of films can mix with the type of photography, for example, Black/White portrait or large

format of landscape photography.

However, sorting by motive, form, and function often leads to discrepant and redundant by various experts. By motive is less controversial than other two. In the camera exposure mode, there are many modes categorized by motive, for example, landscape (small aperture mode), flower (close-up mode), portrait (large aperture mode), sport (high-speed mode), and night (long-time exposure mode). There are also many categories made by motive, such as architecture, journalism, wildlife, science, news, or commercial photography (Hu & Wei, 1999).

here are some classifications by different experts: David III (1992): Documentary, Personal, Artistic, and Professional. Newhall (1982): Art Photography, Pictorial Photography, Straight Photography, Documentary Photography, and Photojournalism five sorts.

In the function category, famous art critic, Barrett (1990) classified to six: Descriptive, Explanatory, Interpretive, Ethically Evaluative, Aesthetically Evaluative, and Theoretical.

Table 1 Photography Classification

Motive	Form	Function	Way of Record
Landscape Flower Portrait Sport Photography Night shot Architecture Journalism Wildlife Science News Commercial- Photography	Documentary, Personal, Artistic, and Professional (David III, 1992) Art Photography, Pictorial Photography, Straight Photography, Documentary Photography, and Photojournalism (Newhall, 1982)	Descriptive, Explanatory, Interpretive, Ethically Evaluative, Aesthetically Evaluative, and Theoretical (Barrett, 1990)	Color of Film Structure of Film Format of Film Digital Image

Aside the motive sorts, all other classifications are individual points of view. Some of them may be based on historical evolution, but not agreed by most people and counties. When we include countries outside of the America, such as Germany, Italy, Spain, Japan, and Russia, as well as other school of photography, there would be more than 20 classifications of photography (Mora, 1998). Besides, the categorization by form and function can be a mixture and not easy to divide into black and white. Barrett (1990) also thought that formative and functional classification may overlap to each other. In many cases, a photograph can be Interpretive, Artistic, Pictorial, and omni subjective journalism (Zinn, 1998). Thus, for keeping the objective in the photography judging, to classify photograph by motive will be the less controversial way. In fact, there is no theoretical base to assure which way of classification for photographs will be the best solution. Moreover, the judging criteria should focus on the main interest and perspective of the photography group. The judging criteria should also be built based on the purpose or request of the individual photo-contest. For example, in November, 2004 the Celebrate Photography Photo Contest held by National Geographic Society has put three explicit judging and scoring criteria for contestant photographs:

1. Simplicity of photograph; 20%
2. Uncluttered imagery; 50%
3. Extent to which the photograph captures the essence of a person, place, or event; 30%

Actually, National Geographic Society can be seen as the grounder of journalist photography and practically the synonym of photography journalism. Thus, the journalist photography is already the clear classification of photography plus three judging and scoring criteria made the contestant a clear picture about the contest and judging procedure. This procedure also approached the first step of objectivity in photography judging. Following we will discuss how the criteria are been set and what need to be set.

Judging Criteria (Outline and Scoring)

The judging criteria of the *Celebrate Photography Photo Contest* held by National Geographic Society emphasizing simplicity of photograph,

uncluttered imagery, and essence of photography object are different with those of photo-clubs and classes, which often focused on substantial of photography medium. National Geographic Society always deals with journalist photography about people and its environment. Thus, National Geographic Society does not need to struggle with classifying the types of photography like most of photo-clubs or classes. On the other hand, photo-clubs and classes do pay more attention on settling down the main categories in a photography contest. For that purpose, most of photo-clubs and classes need to design the specific judging criteria for that specific contest and its contestant to improve or praise their photographic performance.

Currently prevailing Discipline Based Art Education denoted some judging or evaluation ideals that can be very helpful for photography judging (Howell, 2000; Mathews, 2005). Some of criteria proposed by Mittler (1982, 2000) are following:

1. Imitationalism: literal quality and realistic representation
2. Formalism: design and composition quality
3. Emotionalism: expressive quality and view's response and by

Chapman (1978):

4. Functionalism: utilitarian and purpose quality.

These four judging criteria from Mittler and Chapman are originally set for art criticism not integrated only in photography. Thus, for the photography judging purpose, these criteria should be modified. For example, Geahigan (1998) asserted that photography judging should aim at (a) photographer's intention, (b) aesthetic expression, and (c) personal style. Setting photography judging criteria is similar to classifying the photography types. They all need to adjust and modify to fit the individual needs of photographer or photography organization. Feinstein (1989) and Zeller (1984) also held the same thought that the judge or the contest organization need to set judging criteria based on practical purpose and inquiry regardless of possible borrowing from other theory and school.

The experienced photography teacher, Bartel (2002) designed a very practical and objective critique form for photography. This critique form includes six judging criteria for student and contestant making self evaluation: (a) *most eye-catching point* (subject matter or main visual factor), (b) *visual composition* (composition analysis, composition

factors and principles), (c) *intention of photographer* (purpose, expression, and style), (d) *creativity* (innovative and creative aspect), (e) *meaning* (symbolism and function interpretation), and (f) *technique* (light quality, camera angle, depth of field, framing, control of tone and contrast, darkroom, and representation quality).

Sethna (1995) proposed that by judging a photograph, the judge should not only focus on analyzing the component or technique within a photograph, rather view the picture as a whole. A good photograph communicates not only based on single wonderful component such as impressive aesthetic quality, appropriate technique, reasonable composition element, or other factors, but also on putting all the components together and makes a total feel of expression. In sum, the conclusion of the judging criteria from Geahigan (1998), Bartel (2002), and Sethna (1995) stated as: (a) *Total feeling* (narrative and personal style), (b) *Subject matter and attractiveness* (uniqueness and photographer's intention), (c) *The dynamics of composition* (visual power and aesthetics), and (d) *The control of media techniques* (photographic techniques, darkroom techniques, and presentation techniques).

Some practical examples may help to explain how the judging criteria been built and chosen as follows; Zibluk (1999) insisted, "There is no one perfect method; each has its strengths and weaknesses" (p. 22). Zibluk also cited the example of Arkansas State University photojournalism program including composition, negative/print (digital image quality), creativity/originality, and cutline/description of the photograph. These four components share the same score proportion; each component is ranked into five grades and makes 20 points total.

In the same article, Zibluk (1999) also cited two instances, which listed clear and specified judging purpose not for ordinary photography categories (refers to Appendix A). The first one was the grading criteria of Ohio State University journalism program, including impact (5points), composition/creativity (5points), Technique (5points), and lighting (5 points) (Refers to Table 2). The second instance was Photo-Evaluation Sheet of the Association of Texas Photograph Instructors, including technical quality (50%), composition (35%), subject matter (5%), stopping power/originality (5%), meaning (5%) five judging criteria (see also Table 2). However, there were proportion differences of each criterion between Ohio State University journalism program and

the Photo-Evaluation Sheet of the Association of Texas Photograph Instructors. First are equal, but second are no. Following come more examples of judging criteria and grading proportion:

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Table 2 The List of Seven Different Photography Groups' Judging Criteria Arkansas

State University

1. Visual content/Composition (20%)
 2. Photographic technique quality (20%)
 3. Digital image quality (20%)
 4. Creativity/Originality (20%)
 5. Outline/Description (20%)
-

Ohio State University

1. Impact (25%)
 2. Composition/Creativity (25%)
 3. Technique (25%)
 4. Lighting (25%)
-

Association of Texas Photography Instructors

1. Technical quality (50%)
 2. Composition (35%)
 3. Subject matter (5%)
 4. Stopping power/originality (5%)
 5. Meaning (5%)
-

Central Kitsap School District

1. Express Theme (25%)
 2. Originality (25%)
 3. Design Composition (25%)
 4. Effective Use of Media (25%)
-

Texas A&M University (4-H photo-Club)

1. Subject: photographic impact, freshness of approach, story telling (40%)
 2. Technical skill (20%)
 3. Quality: sharpness, graininess, contrast (40%)
-

Washington State University (4-H photo-Club)

1. Category (10%)
2. Quality (30%)

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3. Darkroom techniques (25%)
4. Composition/Creativity (10%)
5. Presentation (10%)

University of Florida (4-H photo-Club)

1. Composition (40%)
 2. Exposure (30%)
 3. Sharpness (30%)
-

See References and Appendix A.

From Table 2, there are obvious differences in judging criteria of the same 4-H photo clubs. Not to mention the differences exist in different organizations. The fact will help to realize that each photography group has the right and need to build its own specific judging criteria. However, these three 4-H photo-Club have done the same thing of categorizing the contestant into novice, mediocre, and experienced three groups. This is just for specifying the entrance level of all contestants.

Therefore, judging criteria are set based on the viewpoint of judge, desire of contestant, and the purpose of the contest. In other words, judging criteria should base on the common view of the most members of that particular photography group. And these criteria can wave depending upon people and time. Actually, different people have different view, sometimes; the point of view can also be changed form time to time (Judging Photograph, 2005). The story-telling ability of each photograph not only rests on the photographer, but also on the viewer. It is personal feel. Each person has own thinking way, taste, education background, photographic experience, and also own evaluation criteria for visual art (May, 1992; Patti, 1990). Similarly, Judging Photograph posted by Scenic-Route.com held the same thought of photography judging criteria, which should be built on same level, and photography style and concept by most of photography group member.

Summarizing from the different views of photography judging criteria, the most agreed criteria will be the four main categories:

1. Expression of subject matter: interesting point, narration, content, and intention.

2. Total impact: eye-catching point, uniqueness, creativity, and personal style.

3. Composition/ Visual impact: visual dynamics, visual direction, visual emotion, and aesthetics.

4. Comprehension of photo-technique: photography technique, Darkroom technique, digital image technique, presentation quality.

Based on these criteria, individual group can modify or select based on practical need, and give each category appropriate scoring. The contest organization can also divide different entrance level of contestant and different photography category. Thus, the judging system will include judging criteria, scoring and proportion, photography category, and entrance level of contestant, which should base on fairness and justice. In other words, the validity and the objectivity of the judging procedure can be established by specifying judging criteria, scoring and proportion, photography category, and entrance level of contestant.

Judging Method

Although the validity and objectivity of the judging system can be built, every judge cannot make sure or promise that he can make an objective judge in a contest, because the result of a judge is depended upon persons, time and sometimes, places. For instance, Johnson (1986) has made a comparison about judging result. In a photo-contest, the Old Dominion International Exhibition Circuit of Virginia, she compared the results of six different panels of judges from the winning four photographs. The result revealed that differences are unexpected huge. Johnson pointed, "This is not to say that some judges are right and others are wrong; this merely points out that judging is subjective, it should encourage those of you whose pictures have been rejected in one judging not to give up, but to try them again elsewhere" (p. 29). Johnson's another judging experience was the result could fluctuate from time to time. Thus, to keep the objectivity and validity of a judging system, contest organization should not only specify the category, criteria, score, and entrance level of contestant, but need to find out a reliable judging method.

Benton (1993) proposed using scientific way to precede the

judging program:

(a) To denote the validity and congruence of the judging content, to build the quantitative standard to each category and criterion. (b) To establish the accuracy and reliability of the judging method, using complex judging not only one single judge. (c) To use pretest and posttest to overcome the time variable, quantitative data, and panel of judges. These scientific judging methods should be able to meet most of need in the most of time. Johnson (1986) went a step further by suggesting complex panels of judges to do complex test. The suggestions of Benton and Johnson are to mitigate the subjectivity and personalization of a judge. The scientific way can help to build the validity and reliability of the photography judge.

Take Taipei Photography Association as example, this group uses complex judging method in its monthly competition, specifically, three round judging. In the first round, the judges decide works been chosen and not been chosen, total two grades. In the second round, the judges use 1, 2, and 3 to give works quantitative scores. Based on the number of judges, the selection was made by the total score. The chosen works in the second round can be seen as good works. The last stage is to choose the best three by giving works four points 1, 2, 3, and 4, and based on the number of judges to choose the highest three to award. This judging system and method are similar to what Benton (1993) suggested, scientific system. Besides, most of amateur photo-clubs in Taiwan are using the same way of judge in photography contest such as Chinese Photography Association, Contax Photography Association, and Chinese Travel Photography Association. However, the first round's two grades, second round's three grades, and fourth round's four grades, seems to be rough, because there would be enormous differentiation between judges when some judges tend to give average higher score than some other judges do. Maybe there will be only one grade differentiation, but result turns decisive. Thus, the reliability and justice of the complex judging method may be influenced by the design of grade and score.

Several reputed educational scholars, such as Black (1999), Popham (2000), and Fraenkel & Wallen (2003) asserted that the grade smaller than five, the differentiation between each grade seem to be large, and will not really reflect the real differentiation of the test score.

Smaller rank can give judges more space to contemplate. However, when the ranking is going to too subtle, for instance, 9, 11, or bigger, in the contrast, judges will be confused not to make a clear decision. Judges will also be trapped by the nuance of the differentiation degree. For example, we categorize the love to our children to 13 grades, or make the creativity of a photograph to 9 grades; and try to define a grade from them. It already sounds peculiar. Therefore, Fraenkel & Wallen suggested that 5 to 7 would be objective grading.

In short, complex judging and re-judging (for overcoming time variable), five-point grading, and multi-panels of judges should be able make photography judge fair and objective. In the meantime, such judging methods should be adjustable to fit each specific need and purpose of photography contest, not constantly unchanged. Such judging methods should be able to meet most people at most of time.

In addition, in the judging process, Benton (1993) proposed two different way of grading: (a) the comparison, by putting all work together, and selecting those better works in certain amount for next round, and (b) the grading, by giving each work score, then choosing those higher scoring works for the next round. Benton also suggested that depends on the purpose and need of the contest, the organization may use them combined or separately.

Take some practical example for explaining the use of those scientific judging methods. This was a campus photography contest in 2004 by Ming-Chuan University. There were two groups: specific theme (the beauty in campus) and non specific theme (general). At the beginning the organization did not point the judging criteria and method. In the practical procedure, panel of judges made the decision to put the originality and funniness in the theme group and nothing for the general group.

At the judging method the comparison was used in the first round, the non good works were eliminated. At the second and third rounds, panel of judges consisted of seven experts from campus and outside of campus spent three hours using grading method and chose one first for each of groups, two second for each, and three third for two groups, plus some for excellence (works refer to appendix B).

The purpose of discussion of the judging system and method is trying to acquire best result of justice, objectivity, validity, and reliability

of a photography judge. Such system and method should be agreed by most of people in certain group and could be adjusted for each specific photography contest. In sum, the fair and object judging system and method are listed as follows:

1. Judging system: judging criteria, score proportion, photography category, and judging object.

2. Judging method: complex judging system, re-judging system, ranking grad, comparing grade, and multiple panels of judges.

The possible extraneous variable may have been well controlled by these two measures. The last category will fall into how the judge or expert is chosen to be a judge in a photography contest. Who will be competent and qualified?

Qualification of a Judge

The recruitment of a judge in Taiwan still stays subjective just like the selection of a photograph shares the same blind point. Take the good old traditional Taiwan Province Art Exhibition as example, the judging system and method used in this organization do show the objectivity and justice, but the nomination system of judges owns the weakness and need to do better (Chang, 2006; Lin, 2006; Shaw, 2003; Lin, 2005). Professor Lin jing-jung (2006) deemed the judging system to be fair and objective, but the judging accuracy could only depend on the consistence and quality of the judges. Professor Lin went a step further and pointed the judges of such an old traditional exhibition should not handled by small amount of groups. It can influence the result of a contest, but also may draft the national development of art. He suggested the panel of judges should recruit from diverse organizations and schools. Furthermore, only one judge can be selected from each unit. The organization should build a consultation for selecting judge members into a judge pool. The consultation will randomly select appropriate judge from the reserve pool for exhibition contest each year. In this issue, Huang (2006) suggested that in the yearly exhibition the judges should be replaced by 1/3, in order to make the judging criteria flexible and to keep award works from the same style.

In fact, Not only the Province Art Exhibition embraced this problem, but many amateur photography clubs have the same problem

of choosing the judges for their contest. Take Taipei Photography Association as example, in both inner and outer contests this organization keep some judges as hereditary taking charge of judging. Such respectful master judges often possessed conservative and obsolete judging perspective and style. Such stale perspective often deters some novice photographers from making creative and innovative works. Due to the hereditary judges, the organization often trapped in pursuing technical perfection, but lacked the spirit to try something new, especially, lack of compassion and reflection toward some new concepts. Thus, only the selection of judges can contribute to enhance the popularity the ability to make art and appreciate art. When judging objectivity and fairness are the subject, a contest needs not only the system and criteria but most important the human himself. How to keep one being objective, educational competent and professional is the very last issue needs to be discussed.

Judges' Proficiency

What competence and skill does a judge need? In the book, Taiwan Tee, Lin, Tsai, Chan, Chen, Young, Chen, Lai, Chen (2003) postulated, "The accuracy of sense judging is deeply related with the objectivity, consistence, repeat, and representation of judges; The judge personnel need to build up not only the theoretic foundation but also the ample practical experiences" (p. 121). Black (1989) also found, "Judging is a field of expertise where few practitioners have formal training; most are self-taught from listening to other judges, and many are unqualified" (p. 9). Black concluded that the judging practitioner needed formal training system, not from self-learning or instinct. For that purpose, Preston (2001) designed 8 questions for those who were willing to become a judge for self-evaluation:

1. *Do you feel there are definite rights and wrongs, good and bad in artistic matters?*
2. *Do you have definite opinions on photographs, but can't explain why you hold these opinions?*
3. *Do you think you know the right way to make pictures?*

4. *Do you want to impress others with your knowledge and expertise?*
 5. *Do you enjoy having power over others?*
 6. *Do you enjoy hearing yourself talk?*
 7. *Does judging inflate your ego, improve your self image?*
 8. *Do you want to earn points for honorary photographic titles?*
- (p. 24)

If your answer is yes, then Preston thought that for the welfare of the contestants, their works, and the contest organization you need to seriously consider your stand point. Actually, the judging practitioners should contemplate about their interest, orientation, and passion to photography and helping others. In fact, Preston held that the enjoyment even the reward during the judging processes absolutely not the humble travel compensation but to help others, sharing knowledge, and to learn some unexpected creative ideas.

Similarly, May (1992) and McInnes (1993) asserted that the judge needs to have certain degree of competence. Giving the fairness by judging the techniques used in a photograph, the judge needs to be acquainted with that technique. This is the expertise matter. If the judge shows lacking of expertise and skill, he could not give the photographs a fair judge and not to mention the objectivity and justice.

In short, a judge needs to be acquainted with the aforementioned four judging criteria: expression of subject matter, total impact, composition/ visual impact, and comprehension of photo-technique. The first two criteria can be learned as the resource of personal concept and style and are the artistic expression. These two criteria can be the focal point for judging experienced photographers. On the contrary, the latter two criteria are well fit for examining those who are novice in photography contestant.

In fact, these four photography judging criteria reveal the direction of art making. When thinking about handling and expression of the multi-media in the modern art, compose technique of digital image, as well as the most elementary and essential variation of the creativity, an individual judge could not be proficient toward all these complicate concept and expression. The judge can only expand his perspective, cumulate experiences, and at least very good at one

criterion. The judge can be more confident and the judging result will also be fair and just.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Frequently contemplating the judging style and method, and learning and analyzing others' judging process are the corner-stone of being a good judge. In spite of the possibility of being not objective by the systematic judging process, which was dumped by some judges and chose the subjective judging process, but Zibluk (1999) argued that judging by subjectivity is because the systematic judging process has not been built, not because subjectivity is a useful way of judging. Sethna (1995) also found that some judges followed their instance to give the grade in a photography contest, but those judges did not reflect and develop a reasonable judging process. Sethna asserted, "Instinctive behavior is not transferable or capable of further development by rational thought" (p. 14). More importantly, most judging situation based on human's sense can be influenced by sample, space, preference, impression, and time factors. (Lin, Tsai, Chan, Chen, Young, Chen, Lai, Chen, Chan, 2003). Thus, setting a judging system, which fit to certain specific contest or organization is in need. Such judging system should also be reasonable, scientific, and systematic. By doing so, a contest does not need to depend on judges' instinct, the contestant can follow the clear request of the contest, and the organization and judges can have the opportunity to explore and improve their own judging method and style.

Summarizing the analysis and discussion, the objectivity and fairness of the photography judge rest on: (a) common entrance level, (b) the choice and modification of the judging criteria, (c) scientific judging method, and (d) judge' proficiency. Following is the propositions in practice of these main categories:

Common Entrance Level

1. *Categorizing photographs reasonably*: First of all, based on the

attribution of each photographic organization to categorize. If it is a general contest, the organization needs to be categorized by subject matter or motive, such as portrait, wildlife, landscape, or journalism. Organizations, which are already focused on a specific purpose in photography, do not need to categorize, such as wildlife associations, portrait associations, or art photography associations.

2. *Qualifying the contestant*: The contest across schools can point contestant to junior and senior. If the contest designs for common civilian, the contestant can also be divided by age and personal status.

3. *Specifying the main concept and form of photographs*: For some special contest. For example, The Taipei 101 Building designed a photography contest for its inauguration ceremony and focused on not being the average architecture photography and only in black and white. So some special purposed contests should specify their special needs in the contest rules.

The Choice and Modification of the Judgeing Criteria

1. *Dividing the attribution and request of each contest*: Depends on each contest's purpose to set the main concept, for example, should the contest in campus require denoting the learning atmosphere, or the beauty of campus? In the routine contest the main concept should wave in each contest.

2. *Approving the judging criteria by most people*: Literature review suggested four judging criteria: (a) *expression of subject matter*, (b) *total impact*, (c) *composition/ visual impact*, and (d) *comprehension of photo-technique*. If the photographic organization takes over these four criteria, it should also need approved by most of group members. And these criteria could be modified depends on each contest's purpose and need.

3. *Modifying the grading proportion*: The scientific judging statistics add to the validity of a judge, but should pay more intention on the grading proportion. If creativity and funniness become the emphasis of the contest, the expression of subject matter and total impact should take more point, such as expression of subject matter for 40% and total impact for 30%, and composition and technique

can be only 30%. On the contrary, if the contest domain is technique, composition and technique should put higher proportion. As mentioned before, composition and technique should take big proportion for the novice photographers, and expression of subject matter and total impact should be the emphasis for the experienced photographers. Thus, the proportion can also be waved depends on purpose of contest and the experience of contestant.

However, these grading proportions are fit for the first and second round of judge. The work will get certain points to be selected by the score for the final round. In the finals, the select works are already excellent, and don't need to receive score again, rather the rank. In sum, the scoring proportion is not fit for the finals.

4. *Ranking five-point in the finals*: After first and second rounds of judging, the relative good works should be chosen. In final judging stage, judges should put all chosen works together then give each work separately five rank of 1 2 3 4 5. The best one will be selected by counting the highest total score of rank. However, judges in this stage can also select works by discussion and negotiation. Only when the viewpoints of judges confront each other, then the process can go back to the base of highest ranking score.

Scientific Judging Method

1. *Reliable judging process*: Compound judging can be two stages or three stages, depends on the scale of the contest and exhibition. The large scale of the traditional Taiwan Province Art Exhibition can considered using pre-test and posttest toward the compound judging for overcoming the variable of time, specifically, the three round judging including first, second and finals in the pretest stage and another three rounds in the posttest. By doing so, the time and personnel cost may be increased, but the judging result can be more objective and just. Thus, the design of judging stage can be based on the scale of the contest. Normally, the contest in campus can choose simple one stage first round and final. Contests like cross campus or large photography organization can choose single stage of three round judges. But large scale of national even international contest should select the pretest and posttest of compound judging procedure.

2. *Panel of judges and multiple panels*: Panel of three to five judges can conquer the possible narrow and fatigued viewpoint of single judge. In the large scale contest, there would be thousands of contestant works, and this can be a painstaking task for judges. Panel of five judges will be appropriate for preventing possible subjectivity. Actually, the numbers of panel depends on the scale of contest too. Take the same example of campus contest: one panel of three to five judges is adequate. The cross campus and large photography organization may need two or three panels of five judges. And national or international contest may consider five panels or even more.

3. *Cross-judging methods*: In fact, scientific system and method could prove the objectivity of judge by using compound judging, multiple panels of judges, grading proportion, scoring technique, plus re-judging (pretest/posttest). Technically, judging objectivity and validity is sound but the reliability, which heavily depends on judge's selection system and entrainment.

4. *The selection of judges*: Each contest and organization should build its own judge bank, which consists of reputed educational practitioners, professionals, awarded, at least three time solo exhibition's experiences, or the editor or author of the popular photography books. The selection consultation of the photographic organization would randomly decide who will be the judging personnel for that specific contest or take turns, when the numbers of judge exceed the numbers needed. By doing so, the possible inappropriate operation by some persons can be averted.

Judge's Proficiency

1. *Judge's competence and skill*: Except the special subject matter, general proficiency of a photography judge should comprise the judging abilities of (a) *expression of subject matter*, (b) *total impact*, (c) *composition/ visual impact*, and (d) *comprehension of photo-technique*. Such judging criteria can also be the selection criteria for recruiting a judge. However, the organization should not actively test the judges, because they are somehow well-known experts. The organization or the consultation can only collect data from observation and get

approval from the members in the organization or consultation. For the special subject matter contest, such as under water photography or commercial photography can enhance the proportion of those special experts.

In the closed judging, the judges do not need face the contestants, do not make explanation or feedback; otherwise, judges need the skill of oral expression.

2. *Judge's objectivity*: Paying more attention to development and change of the photography concept and expression, opening mind to accept the variation and innovation, contemplating one's judging style, and learning other's judging style are the premise of being a good judge.

Conclusion

Finally, we should go back to realize the purpose of a photography contest, and what are the purpose and function of the judging, when we are exploring the objectivity and fairness of the judge. Sure we want to find out the better photographs to award or exhibit. Another mission is to enhance the photographic level in general and to set a photographic aesthetical standard. However, because of the inherent subjectivity of art judging, sometimes, the judging result is not only absent of educational purpose, but also becomes in-objective, unfair, and not just. Worse is setting an inappropriate aesthetical standard for the public. The purpose and the mercy of judging will be lost. Thus, judges need to keep objective and just, as well as missionary to be an educator for improving photographic level.

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Appendix A



Photo Evaluation

To evaluate photographs on the same criteria, the Association of Texas Photography Instructors has developed this critique sheet to help both the judges and the photographers. This sheet should help photographers spot areas for improvement in their photographs according to this judge. The decision of the judge remains final.

FOR STUDENT TO COMPLETE:

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

Camera Model _____ Lens _____ Film _____ ISO _____

Lighting conditions: (circle one or more)

bright sun	partly cloudy	available, artificial light	timed exposure
partly cloudy	cloudy	flash	

Enlarger

Exposure time _____ F/stop _____ Filter No. _____ Height _____

FOR INSTRUCTOR/JUDGE TO COMPLETE:

	Excellent		Good		Poor
	5	4	3	2	1
TECHNICAL QUALITY					
This includes the proper development of film (as evident in the print), proper exposure, good use of flash when needed, good use of available light when no flash is used, sharp focus and sharp action or action that is intentionally blurred.					
Focus	5	4	3	2	1
Appropriate shutter speed	5	4	3	2	1
Appropriate quality/direction of light	5	4	3	2	1
Proper film processing	5	4	3	2	1
Proper print processing	5	4	3	2	1
Lack of dust/fingerprints	5	4	3	2	1
Appropriate print density	5	4	3	2	1
Appropriate dodging/burning	5	4	3	2	1
Even/straight borders	5	4	3	2	1

COMMENTS:

TECHNICAL GRADE _____ / 5 (3)

* circled on the box

Analyzing the Objectivity of Photography Judging

	Excellent 5	4	Good 3	2	Poor 1
COMPOSITION					
For most photographs, this includes such things as the inclusion of repetition of shapes, leading lines, and curves. This also includes the lack of mergers where one aspect of a photograph merges into another creating an unnatural look (such as a football goal growing out of a player's head). It also includes simplicity, keeping unwanted objects out of the frame. The rule of thirds provides balance within a photograph by offsetting the subject from the center of the frame. The forms, lines, tones, textures, shapes, hues, patterns and balance within the photograph must contribute to good composition.					
Simplicity	5	4	3	2	1
Use of rule of thirds	5	4	3	2	1
Frame filled with subject	5	4	3	2	1
No mergers of subject/background	5	4	3	2	1
Cropped properly	5	4	3	2	1
Appropriate use of depth of field	5	4	3	2	1
SUBJECT MATTER					
The subject of a photograph should be appropriate for the photographer's abilities and equipment. Shooting a college football game with a 50mm lens is generally a poor choice of subject matter, for example, as is shooting students in the halls with a 300mm lens. Furthermore, the subject should be visually respected. Photographers are not a part of the action when taking pictures at an event. They are part of the action in the studio. This should be clear from the photograph. The subject matter must also be appropriate for the assignment given.					
STOPPING POWER/ORIGINALITY					
People are constantly bombarded by visual images and a good photograph should be unique. It should engage the curiosity of the viewer. In order to do this, the photograph should be unusual in some manner so as to attract attention. However, the photographer should not resort to gimmickry to grab the attention of the viewer. Further, just as a photograph must be high in technical quality and show a good subject doing something unusual, it should also appeal to the emotions of the viewer. A good photograph will invoke the use of such adjectives as: warm, sensitive, lovely, beautiful, serene, lonely, angry and the like.					
MEANING					
Finally, a significant photograph must mean something. This is where the truly great photographs will shine above the rest. It's also where the most subjectivity comes in. A good photograph must do more than just record the event - it must give meaning to it. It's the meaning that gives "soul" to an image.					
COMMENTS:					
COMPOSITION GRADE _____/50					
FINAL GRADE OR FINAL PLACE (point total = 100 pts.) _____					
Excellent	96-100	Good	80-89	Poor	70-74
Excellent	90-95	Below average	75-80	Unacceptable	≤ 69
SUGGESTIONS FOR JUDGES					
There are two basic ways to judge a photo contest. The first involves spreading out all of the entries in any particular category and judging each one against each other. The second involves judging each one against a fixed set of criteria and, in effect, giving the awards to the photographs with the highest "grades." Either of these methods can be used effectively, but the photographers must realize that no matter which system is used, a great deal of subjectivity is involved.					

Retrieved from: Zibluk, J. (1999). Evaluating photographs.

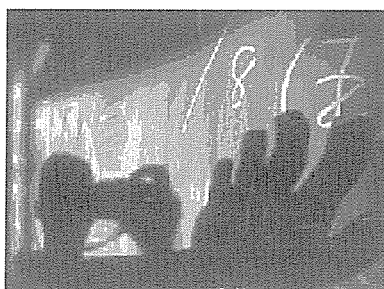
Appendix B



Golden medal of Theme Group, in title of "Direction" by Chang, C. S.



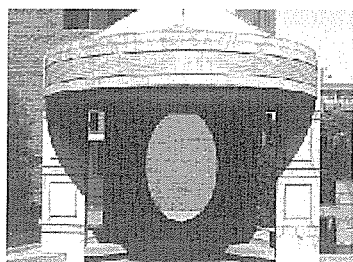
Golden medal of General Group, in title of "Tired and getting sleep" by Din, C. W.



Silver medal of Theme Group, in title of "In Campus" by Lin, B. C.



Silver medal of General Group, in title of "Viewing" by Sui, C. T.



Silver medal of Theme Group, in title of "The Shelter" by Liou, B. T.



Silver medal of General Group, in title of "Me and pigeon" by Lin, B. C.

<http://www.mcu.edu.tw/admin/rdoffice/mcuweekly/594/arts.htm>