

Special Subjects for 2018 Digital Critiques

January: Street Photography

The first image that typically comes to mind for the term street photography is an image of a stranger just walking down the street in a city like New York, London, or Tokyo. This is a huge part of street photography of course, but it is only one part, and it can cause confusion over the true meaning of the term. Street photography is candid photography of life and human nature. It is very similar to candid photography, but the photographer documents the public space as he or she sees it. It is a way for us to show our surroundings, and how we as photographers relate to them. We are filtering what we see, too find the moments that intrigue us, and to then share them with others. It's like daydreaming with a camera.

People do not need to be present for an image to be considered a street photograph. The photograph need not be taken in a city, or in a busy market. It can be taken anywhere, and can portray nearly anything, as long as it isn't posed or manipulated. It can be shot at a family barbecue, or in the middle of 5th Avenue in New York City.

While many may consider the term as clunky, there is an elegant side to it that I think is often missed. The street is the most public and accessible of places, and street photography is the most public and accessible form of photography. A street photographer should not just look at the popular tourists spots but try some behind the scene and out of the way locations. Anyone can do it. You do not need an expensive camera. You do not need a big studio, professional lighting, or beautiful models. We all have the same content out there, and it's up to us to figure out how to capture that and bring it home.

In addition, while technical quality is always important to every form of photography, it is not celebrated in street photography in quite the same way. A nature or landscape image needs to be sharp. It usually needs to be able to be printed at large sizes with great technical quality. In these genres you can pick the perfect location, frame it the perfect way, choose the perfect equipment and settings, and continue to come back until you get the perfect lighting. With street photography, on the other hand, the best image of your life can pop right in front of you on the way to get your morning coffee. This spontaneity is what's celebrated. That is why grainy images, slightly off-kilter framing or imperfect focus will not always ruin a street photograph. Sometimes they will, and we must aim for technical mastery, but other times they can add to the realness of the moment. Sometimes these deficiencies may actually improve the image.

March: Altered Reality

The image must obviously display a change in natural color, form, shape, or any combination of these three. Creative images are often montages (a blending or composite of multiple images). High Dynamic Range (HDR) images without further changes are not considered creative. The original image must be made by the entrant. All images must be original and may not incorporate elements produced by anyone else. Original images must be altered solely by the maker. Artwork or computer graphics generated by the entrant may be incorporated, if the original photographic content predominates. Images may not be constructed entirely within a computer. It is necessary that the core content of the image be identifiable. Any subject matter is acceptable as long as the above guidelines are followed. Creative images are judged both for their technical and pictorial merit. The image should have strong composition, pleasing quality,

and color, texture, pattern, and/or tone impact. The appropriateness of the technique selected to create altered reality is considered in judging. The content is unrestricted.

May: Photojournalism

Photojournalism entries shall consist of images with informative content and emotional impact, reflecting the human presence in our world. The journalistic (story-telling) value of the image shall receive priority over pictorial quality. In the interest of credibility, images that misrepresent the truth, such as those from events or activities specifically arranged for photography or of subjects directed or hired for photography, are not eligible.

Note: Entrants are cautioned that the previous sentence includes any images that appear to be arranged or posed to the judges. Entrants are therefore advised that such images are likely to be disqualified (DQed).

July: Architecture

This category encompasses habitable buildings or utilitarian architecturally-designed structures such as barns, theaters, airports, factories, office buildings, lighthouses, bridges, monuments, and distinct elements thereof, as well as similar structures that are both aesthetically pleasing and meaningful representations of their subjects. This category includes interior structures such as stairways, windows, and doors, as well as exterior structures such as steeples, towers, and domes. Architectural images should convey the experience of being in and around a building or structure. People may be included in an architectural photo but should not overpower the emphasis on the nature of the structure. An image may be presented in color or monochrome.

Alterations

As with all reality-based divisions, (Nature, Photo Travel, and Photojournalism), techniques that add, relocate, replace or remove any element of the original image, except by cropping, are not permitted. The only allowable modifications are removal of dust, scratches or digital noise, restoration of the existing appearance of the original scene, sharpening that is not obvious, and complete conversion to grayscale monochrome. Other derivations, including infrared, are not eligible. All allowed adjustments must appear natural.

Note: "Restoration of the appearance of the original scene" may include techniques such as HDR, focus stacking and dodging/burning provided they do not alter the contents of the original scene and the result looks natural.

Borders

Borders are optional, but must be 3 or 4 pixels in width and must be white or a shade of grey.

September: Red

Color has two important roles in a photograph. First, color grabs the attention of the viewer. Second, color sets the mood of an image. This is especially true with the color red, where it often creates drama in a photograph. The color red can be found on vehicles, machinery, tail lights, curbs, umbrellas, ivy, flowers, birds, and on many other subjects. In this special subject category, you are challenged to incorporate the color red in your image. The color does not have to dominate your photograph, but the presence of red should be a noticeable component of your image.

October: Fall Colors

This category consists of a subject where fall colors (yellow, orange, brown, and/or red) predominate.