A GUIDE FOR CRITIQUING PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES
The purpose of ‘critiquing’ photographs should be to help photographers improve their work through a better understanding and proficiency in the technical aspects of photography and the theory of visual literacy, all this while helping the photographer maintain their individuality and the way of seeing.
The ‘critique’ should attempt to open the photographer’s own ‘thought process’ (logic), it should NOT be an attempt to change the photographer into a clone of the assessor – the curse to creativity!
It is essential to determine the photographer’s purpose for making the image: was it to be a clinical study, story illustration, social documentary, fine art piece or perhaps an entry for a competition? Only then can the ‘critique’ be properly focused to assist the photographer along an effective learning path.
Editors, judges and evaluators all agree:

a successful photographic image must have good technical quality to start with.
FOCUS:

Is the image sharp? If not, is it intentionally soft and successful?
CLEANLINESS:

Is it free of scratches, dust spots, stains, lens flare, etc?
EXPOSURE:

Is it too light, too dark or just right?
LIGHTING:

Is the lighting too contrasty, too flat or just right?
COLOURS:

Does it have neutral colours or a strange colour cast?
PRINTING:

Are the image tones too contrasty, too flat or just right?
COMPOSITION

Affected by the camera viewpoint and focal length of the lens.

It can raise an image from a technical success to an artistic success!
BALANCE:

Is the image aligned correctly in the frame? Are large and small visual elements positioned to offer overall balance to the image, if not, is the result effective and appropriate for the purpose or story of the image.
LOGIC:

Is the arrangement of the visual elements effective for the image’s purpose/story?
PURPOSE:

Is there a strong centre of interest, pattern or design?
CLARITY:

Is it simple, yet complete and without distracting elements?
EMOTIONAL IMPACT

The vital element for a truly great image, making it unique and memorable.
Does it grab and keep your attention?
Does it have the ‘wow’ factor.
PROVOCATIVE:

Does it excite your imagination, or create a strong emotion in you?
CREATIVE:

Does it show a familiar subject in a new, unusual and yet effective way?
UNUSUAL:

Does it show a very unusual subject in an effective way?
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