

12 ELEMENTS OF A MERIT IMAGE

The Photographic Exhibitions Committee of PPA uses the 12 elements below as the “gold standard” to define a merit image. These evaluation criteria connect the modern practice of photography and its photographers to the historical practice of photography begun nearly two centuries ago.

12 elements have been defined as necessary for the success of an art piece or image. Any image, art piece, or photograph will reveal some measure of all twelve elements, while a visually superior example will reveal obvious consideration of each one.

- 1. Impact** – the sense one gets upon viewing an image for the first time. Compelling images evoke laughter, sadness, anger, pride, wonder or another intense emotion. There can be impact in any of these twelve elements.
- 2. Technical Excellence** – the print quality of the image itself as it is presented for viewing. Retouching, manipulation, sharpness, exposure, printing, mounting, and correct color are some items that speak to the qualities of the physical print.
- 3. Creativity** – the original, fresh, and external expression of the imagination of the maker, using the medium to convey an idea, message or thought.
- 4. Style** – defined in a number of ways as it applies to a creative image; style might be defined by a specific genre or simply be recognizable as the characteristics of how a specific artist applies light to a subject. It can impact an image in a positive manner when the subject matter and the style are appropriate for each other, or it can have a negative effect when they are at odds.
- 5. Composition** – bringing all of the visual elements together in concert to express the purpose of the image. Proper composition holds the viewer in the image and prompts the viewer to look where the creator intends. Effective composition can be pleasing or disturbing, depending on the intent of the image maker.
- 6. Presentation** – affects an image by giving it a finished look. The mats and borders used, either physical or digital, should support and enhance the image, not distract from it.
- 7. Color Balance** – supplies harmony to an image. An image in which the tones work together, effectively supporting the image, can enhance its emotional appeal. Color balance is not always harmonious and can be used to evoke diverse feelings for effect.
- 8. Center of Interest** – the point or points on the image where the maker wants the viewer to stop as they view the image. There can be primary and secondary centers of interest. Occasionally there will be no specific center of interest, when the entire scene collectively serves as the center of interest.
- 9. Lighting** – the use and control of light; refers to how dimension, shape and roundness are defined in an image. Whether the light applied to an image is man-made or natural, proper use of it should enhance an image.
- 10. Subject Matter** – should always be appropriate to the story being told in an image.
- 11. Technique** – the approach used to create the image. Printing, lighting, posing, capture, presentation media, and more are part of the technique applied to an image.
- 12. Storytelling** – refers to the image’s ability to evoke imagination. One beautiful thing about art is that each viewer might collect his own message or read her own story in an image.

PPA.com/12Elements

NEED HELP WITH THE IPC?

PPA offers many resources to help you get your images ready for PPA’s District and International Photographic Competitions:

ONLINE

- Guidelines & rules
- Important entry dates and submission deadlines at PPA.com/Competitions
- Videos on how to prepare your images and how to make final enhancements PPA.com/Edu

IN PERSON

Visit the Merit Café at Imaging USA for mini programs on a variety of different topics about print competition such as titles, presentations and to book one-on-one mentor sessions with a PPA approved juror who will review your images and offer advice and guidance.

PPA.com/Competitions

PPA

Photographic Competitions

Overview & Cheat Sheet

Get the most out of your participation!



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PPA
BE MORE Challenged

WHY SHOULD YOU ENTER A PPA PHOTO COMPETITION?

EARN YOUR PPA DEGREE!

PPA offers 4 photographic degrees representing different areas of expertise.

- Photographic Craftsman (Cr.Photog.)
- Master of Photography (M.Photog.)
- Master of Wedding Photography (M.Wed.Photog.)
- Master Artist (M.Artist)

Each degree is earned through an accumulative merit system. The 3 Master degrees each require 13 exhibition merits as part of the 25 total merits you must earn to receive one of these degrees.

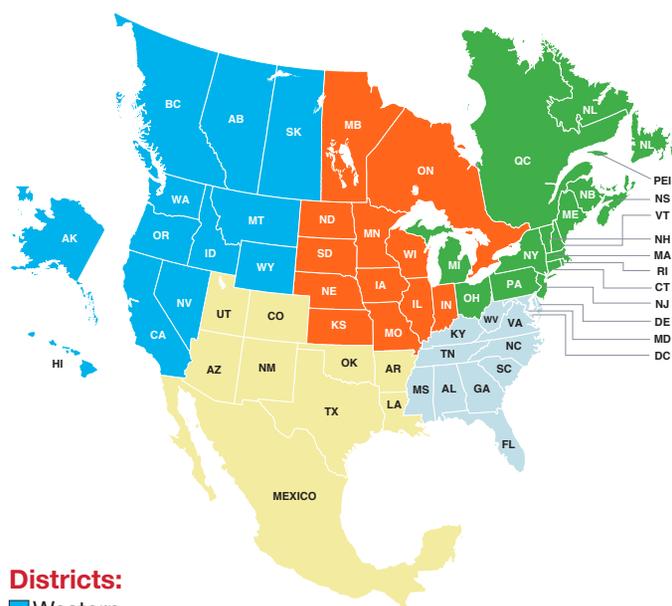
IMPROVE AS AN ARTIST!

Want to continue to grow in your photography skills? PPA offers constructive critiques of your entries.

- Have your entries personally critiqued by trained, professional, approved PPA jurors. You will be provided with comments, suggestions and ideas for how you can improve the image and also what you did RIGHT.
- Critiques can be ordered when you register for your local district competition and/or for the international level competition.
- Critiques are uploaded to your PPA profile for you review approximately two to three weeks after the judging event has ended.

HOW DO I ENTER?

Entering a PPA photographic competition is easy and can be done at your local district level and/or at the international level known as the International Photographic Competition (IPC). Each district is established by the geographical grouping of specific states and territories:



Districts:
■ Western
■ Southwestern
■ Northcentral
■ Northeast
■ Southeast

2019 Competitions	Judging Dates	Registration Opens	Early Deadline	Late Deadline with additional fee
District Competition	June 2-7, 2019	April 8, 2019	May 8, 2019 by 5pm ET	May 22, 2019 by 5pm ET
International Competition	August 18-23, 2019	June 14, 2019	July 18, 2019 by 5pm ET	August 1, 2019 by 5pm ET

SCORING

Ever wondered how the IPC scoring is done? For each district competition and for IPC, each image goes in front of a judging panel that is comprised of five approved jurors. Images are judged in either the Photographic Open or Artist competition. In the Wedding and Artist categories, three of the five judges must have their specialty qualification in that specific category. Images are judged on the 12 elements of a merit image (see inside panel) and a specific score is then assigned.

Exceptional	100-95
Superior	94-90
Excellent	89-85
Deserving of a Merit	84-80
Above Average	79-75
Average	74-70
Below Exhibition Standards	69-65

At the district level, all images that receive a score of 80 or above receive a seal of approval. Sealed district images entered in the IPC then receive a PPA merit. Images entered at IPC that receive a score of 80 or above also earn a PPA merit.

Merited images with the score range of 85-94 are judged for PPA's prestigious Loan Collection at the international level. Images with the score of 95-100 are automatically accepted into the Loan Collection.