

# PPA

## THE 12 ELEMENTS OF A MERIT IMAGE THAT JUDGES USE WHEN EVALUATING PHOTOGRAPHS

The Professional Photographers of America has published the following list of the 12 Elements of a Merit Print. These are the criteria that PPGNY judges consider when judging image competitions.

Twelve 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.

### IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE:

- 1.) **IMPACT** is 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** is 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** is the original, fresh, and external expression of the imagination of the maker by using the medium to convey an idea, message or thought.
- 4.) **STYLE** is defined in a number of ways as it applies to a creative image. It 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** is important to the design of an image, 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** is 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** is 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.) **STORY TELLING** 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.

# NYIP Guidelines for Image Improvement

As a former instructor for what, at the time, was the largest correspondence school in the world I was coached to advise my students of the following three image improvement guidelines:

1. Identify the subject.
2. Focus the viewer's attention on the subject.
3. Eliminate or minimize distracting visual elements that "compete" with the main subject.

There are many ways to do this...

Content Aware Fill, the Healing Brush, the Clone Stamp Tool, Vignettes, Selective Focus, Spot/Dust Removal tools, Framing, etc.

# Border / Edge Treatment Process in PhotoShop

## Step-by-Step

1. Select an image.
2. Edit/tweak the image.
3. Decide on a border/edge treatment
  - Single Stroke
  - Multiple Strokes
  - Drop Shadow, Outer Glow
  - Shadow Box
  - Matted / Frame

### SINGLE STROKE:

1. Open your image file in Photoshop (Ps).
2. Unlock the *Background* layer by clicking on the padlock on the right side of the *Background* layer tab in the Layers Palette. (This will make the “fx” button at the bottom left of the layers palette active (available - clickable).
3. Click on the “fx” button. (This will open a “*Blending Options*” drop-down box.)
4. Click on “*Blending Options*” at the top of this drop-down box. (This will open a “*Layer Style*” control panel.
5. It is in this that you’ll create and edit most of your border/edge treatments.  
In the lower left corner of the “*Layer Style*” control panel you will see another “fx” button. When you click this button you will be presented with even more Blending Options which you can add to the Blending Options above.
6. Click on “*Stroke*” and you will be presented with a wide variety of controls and options like: “*Position*”<sup>1</sup>, *Size, Fill Type, Color, Opacity, Blend Mode*, etc.
7. Experiment with these controls to develop/create the style of stroke you desire.

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<sup>1</sup> USE THE “*Inside*” POSITION OTHERWISE YOU WILL NOT SEE THE COMPLETE STROKE.

## MULTIPLE STROKES:

1. Follow the steps in SINGLE STROKE instructions above.
2. Once you have the “*Layer Style*” control panel open go to the “*fx*” button in the bottom left of the panel and click on it.
3. From the window that pops up you can add additional strokes or other border/edge treatment effects (*fx*) to your available tool set – which you can then apply to your image(s).
4. Like any other layer treatment, the position in the layer stack of each stroke (which are individually customizable) has a direct bearing on the results and appearance of your treatment.
5. Stroke layer position/order/hierarchy can be adjusted with the up “↑” and down “↓” arrows immediately to the right of the “*fx*” button at the bottom of the “*Layer Style*” control panel.

## DROP SHADOW(S), OUTER GLOW(S), SHADOW BOXES, FRAMES...

In order for these effects to work (be seen) you will need to drop your image on top of a larger image. Otherwise you will have nothing for the *Outer Glow*, *Drop Shadow* or *Outside/Centered Stroke* to show up against.

## CREATING THE LARGER BACKGROUND IMAGE:

1. Click the vertical ruler on the left edge of the workspace and drag the guideline to the right until it aligns with the right edge of the image.
2. Click on the horizontal ruler at the top edge of the workspace and drag the guideline down until it aligns with the bottom edge of your image.
3. You should now have two perpendicular guide lines which intersect the workspace rulers and point to the exact dimensions of your image.
4. Write down these dimensions and add a small percentage to these values.
5. Go to *File* ⇒ *New*.
6. Enter the adjusted dimensions in “*Width*” and “*Height*” respectively, “*Background Contents*”, Horizontal or Vertical “*Orientation*” and confirm that the resolution is the same as your image.
7. Click “*Create*”. This will open your new “background” file in your Ps workspace. (Your original file should still be available via a tab below your menu bar and above the workspace.)
8. Click on the tab for your image to open it.
9. Go to “*Select*” ⇒ “*All*”. This will place “marching ants” around your entire image showing that it has been selected.
10. Use the move tool (“*+*”) and drag your selected image up to the new background tab at the top of the workspace and then onto the new background – where it should snap into place.
11. In the Ps layers palette you should now have two layers. The “*Background*” layer should be a locked (you’ll notice a padlock in the layers tab) layer underneath the image layer (“*Layer 1*”) which should not be locked.

CREATING/ADDING EFFECTS TO EITHER THE BACKGROUND, THE IMAGE OR BOTH:

12. In order to add “fx” to the “*Background*” layer you will need to unlock it first. Click on the padlock to unlock the layer and activate the “fx” button.
13. Now you can apply “fx”/“*Blending Options*” to both the “*Background*” and image layer (“*Layer 1*”).
14. Outer Glows, Drop Shadows and/or Center/Outside Strokes when applied to the image layer (“*Layer 1*”) will now show up against the larger background (“*Background*”) layer.

FURTHER EXPERIMENTATION WILL YIELD A WIDE VARIETY OF RESULTS...

Blending modes, color manipulations, opacity, spread, global light, contours, bevel and emboss,