

VPC What Makes a Good Image?

What makes a good image is a subject of much debate.

Everyone finds different subjects in an image appealing to varying degrees, which is why photography is subjective. But, if the photographer can find subject matter that a large percentage of people will be drawn to, find interesting, stimulating or compelling, then the maker is starting to achieve a successful outcome with his/her photography.

A good image has the ability to communicate with the viewer. It can put the viewer in a particular moment in time or tell a story or effect their emotion. Most viewers remember these type of images rather than the technically perfect ones.

Elements of a Good Image:

Emotion and/or 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. Images that evoke emotion, have impact, convey a certain mood or feeling, always stand out.

Originality and Creativity:

Are the fresh and external expressions of the imagination of the maker by using the medium to convey an idea, message or thought. These images often captivate the viewer.

Story Telling:

Is the image's ability to evoke imagination. Each viewer of an image might collect his/her own message or read her/his own story in an image.

Centre 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 centres of interest. Occasionally there will be no specific centre of interest, when the entire scene collectively serves as the centre of interest.

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. Anything not directly contributing to the image is excluded. 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.

Colour Balance:

Supplies harmony to an image. An image in which the tones work together, effectively supporting the image, can enhance its emotional appeal and/or impact. Colour balance is not always harmonious and can be used to evoke diverse feelings for effect.

Lighting:

Is the use and control of light. It refers to how dimension, shape and roundness are defined in an image. Whether the light applied to an image is man-made or natural, it should enhance an image.

Technical excellence:

Is the quality of the image itself as it is presented for viewing. Application of the exposure triangle, retouching, manipulation, sharpness/non-sharpness (depending on the intent of the image maker), and colours used are some items that speak to the qualities of the image.

Presentation:

Can affect an image by giving it a finished look.

If used, the mats and borders chosen should support and enhance the image, not distract from it.