



PSA News

AUSTRALIA

MARCH 2024

Membership

There were no new PSA members in Australia in February.

Worldwide, the membership of PSA has just reached 6000.

The countries with more than 100 members are:

United States	3466
India	307
China	285
AUSTRALIA	207
Canada	167
England	148
Hong Kong	146
Indonesia	141

Thank You

This month we another Photojournalism article from Jen Fawkes.

I welcome contributions from all members on anything related to photography.

Don't be shy, please send me anything, short or long.

PSA NEWSLETTER COMPETITION:

If your Club publishes a newsletter, you are encouraged to enter this competition. In addition to awards, entrants receive valuable feed-back from the judges. Entries open April 1 and close June 1 for publications issued after June 1, 2023.

The 2024 "Guidance to Editors for Newsletter Design" and other information is available on the website at: <https://psaphoto.org/page/newsletter-contest>, or e-mail the Director at: newslettercontest-director@psa-photo.org

Staging vs Posing in Photojournalism.

Jen Fawkes, APSA, EPSA, SPSA

The concept of ‘staged images’ in Photojournalism continues to be a challenge for both entrants and judges, and, more recently, the idea of ‘posing’ has been raised with much confusion about the difference.

The Photojournalism definition states:

Images that misrepresent the truth, such as those from events or activities arranged specifically for photography, or of subjects directed or hired for photography are NOT eligible.

Photojournalism is a genre that is considered ‘reality-based’. That is the images presented must represent the truth, representing real people who are involved in a genuine activity. By creating or changing a scene the photographer is misrepresenting the truth. Thus, photojournalism relies heavily on the integrity and honesty of the photographer, core values of being a photojournalist.

To reduce some of the confusion, I have tried to explain the differences between a ‘staged’ image and a ‘posed’ image. The first being disallowed in a Photojournalism competition, the latter being acceptable.

1. What is a staged scene?

A staged scene is one that has been deliberately arranged for the purpose of photography. This ‘staging’ can be by the photographer, or by a third party, such as a photography tour company. It may not necessarily involve the exchange of money and will involve the engaging, or hiring, of a subject, for the sole purpose of creating a scene or activity for a photographer.

It worth going to the PSA website to view the ‘staged images gallery’, found here: <https://psa-photo.org/page/mo-ptd-staged-images>



This is a well-known staged image, taken during a photo tour in China. The shop owner puts on a performance for the photographers (for a fee). The end results may be a stunning image but does not represent real life. These images are suitable for an open competition but are not permitted in Photojournalism.

2. What is the difference between staging and posing?

Posing a subject for an image is permissible so long as the core story remains unchanged. This assumes that the image being taken involves subjects that are genuine and that the event or activity they are engaged in is really taking place. It is permissible to engage with a subject (this is good photographic practice) and to ask them to face you. Here are some examples:

*You are shooting a parade, and a clown walks past – you call out so that the clown faces you. This would be considered **posing**, as the subject is real, and the event is happening in real time.*

*At the end of the parade, you meet the clown and ask you if you can take his picture. This would also consider being **posing**, the clown is part of a real event even if the parade is over.*

*You ask the clown to change his costume. This would be considered **staging**, as you have now changed the story (a different costume that you have directed) and it no longer reflects the truth for the event you are shooting.*



This is a posed image – the event (the flooding) was genuine, and the boys were having fun playing in the flood waters. Nothing in the story has been altered.

3. How do I know that other people's images are not staged?

You may never know this since Photojournalism relies on the honesty and integrity of the photographer.

4. Why do travel companies 'stage' images for photographers?

By definition, there is nothing wrong with a staged image and many travel operators will arrange situations that provide opportunities for participants to create photographic art. However, since they do not represent 'real life' the images cannot be entered in competitions for the reality-based divisions. These images are permissible in open competition.

5. What are some examples of staging an image?

- *You are on a photo tour and the tour leader suggests finding a subject to stand near a piece of street art.*
- *You ask your friends to dress in heritage costumes for a photo shoot.*
- *You attend a photo workshop where the subjects are directed to ride horses past you (and the other photographers).*

6. What are some examples of posing?

- *You see people dancing near some interesting street art and capture their joy.*
- *You attend a heritage festival (a real event) and capture images of people in heritage costumes.*
- *You visit a friend's farm and capture them herding cattle as part of their normal work.*

7. How do judges know if an image has been 'staged'?

Judges are encouraged to understand the difference between staging and posing, and to be familiar with the 'staged images' gallery. Judges should not 'assume' an image is staged unless they are able to provide evidence. Sometimes there are clues – such as if a scene is choreographed or colour coordinated, or people wearing clothing they would not normally wear for the task being shown. If judges are unsure, they should seek advice from the Exhibition chairperson, or raise their concerns at an awards meeting.

The key message to note here is the idea that true images represent true subjects, participating in genuine activities, and the image is taken at the time that the activity is happening.

While it may be impossible at times to detect breaches of the rule against staging, the Photojournalism Code of Ethics will hold true, in that it is trusting you, the Photographer, to tell the truth.

Note: For the three 'reality' Divisions - Photojournalism, Photo Travel and Nature - there are specific definitions that describe what content is and is not allowed, and what editing is and is not allowed. These definitions can be found on the PSA website <https://psa-photo.org/page/division-definitions>.

If you have any doubt at all that one of your images does not satisfy the relevant definition, or if you think the judges might suspect that it does not meet the relevant definition, the safest approach is to enter the image in an open competition. RK

Learning from image critiques

Roy Killen, APSA, GMPSA, EFIAP

Regardless of how experienced you are as a photographer, you can learn from getting critiques on your images. One of the main advantages of a good critique is that it can provide a fresh perspective on your work, helping you to consider new possibilities for both image capture and processing. Critiques can be particularly helpful if you are in a creative rut.

Ideally, you will be able to receive feedback from several photographers with varying styles and experience levels to gain a wide range of perspectives on your work. This is important if you want to develop a well-rounded approach to your photography.

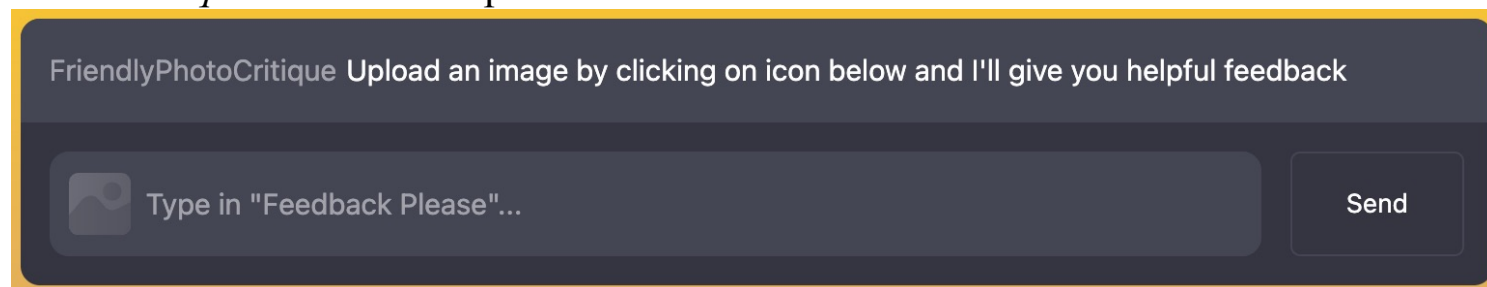
So, how can you get useful critiques? A good starting point is to seek feedback from people whose work you respect and who have expertise in the areas you want to improve. If you are a member of a photography club, there should be other members willing to help you. Before you ask someone to critique your images, you need to do some preparation. Start by asking yourself what you hope to learn from the critique. Are you seeking feedback on capture techniques, composition, editing, the aesthetic qualities of your image, or something else? If you are clear about what you want to improve, you can ask for feedback on specific things.

Receiving positive feedback on the strengths of your images can be a great confidence booster, particularly when it helps you see your work in a new light. This can encourage you to develop further the things you already do well. But the goal should not be to get your ego stroked; it should be to improve your photography. Any critiques that you initially consider negative should be considered with an open mind. No critique will be of any value if you are unwilling to learn.

At some stage in your photographic journey, you have probably received critiques that you did not like or agree with. This is not an uncommon situation in photography clubs where the critiques are being provided by judges who are under time pressure. The judge may not have time to appreciate the subtle messages in your image. Regardless of what a judge says about your images, don't be too quick to assume that they are wrong and you are right. Always listen, try to understand why the judge has made a particular comment, or why they missed something in your image that you thought was important. No matter what someone says about your image (or what they fail to see in your image) there will be a reason for that - we don't all see things the same way. You should always try to put aside your initial emotional reaction to an unfavourable comment and try to learn from the experience.

Recently it has become possible to get AI-generated critiques. Your first reaction to that might be: “There’s no way AI can critique images” - but that would be an incorrect assumption. A system that is currently able to generate image critiques for free is “Brent’s Friendly Photo Critique” (<https://photocritique.app/>).

PhotoCritique uses this simple interface:



After you upload an image and ask for feedback, *PhotoCritique* rapidly provides a summary critique and gives you the option of asking for more detailed feedback by just responding with “yes”. The more detailed critique usually includes comments on things such as lighting and composition, and makes suggestions for things you might consider when next photographing a similar subject. You can obtain more detailed information by entering requests such as “More specific information on composition”. I have tried *PhotoCritique* with a variety of images, and every time it provides at least one suggestion for improving the image in a way that I had not considered. Invariably, the critiques are more detailed than I would expect to get in a club competition when the judge is working within a strict time frame.

Of course, you cannot expect that AI will provide a perfect critique of any image - just as you cannot expect a perfect critique from a human. When a judge (or friend) tries to interpret one of your images, they will call upon their knowledge, their memories, and their culture. These things give them a way of seeing the world and expressing their views. The AI equivalent of this human ‘background’ is the way in which the system was ‘trained’. Consequently, the critiques can have a characteristic style. The *PhotoCritique* site always tends to give very positive, encouraging comments because it’s ‘training’ was based on that type of critique by its developer, Brent Mail.

It is crucial to approach AI critiques as supplementary feedback and not as a replacement for human judgment. Humans can obviously provide valuable insights and opinions that consider subjective aspects and artistic intent in ways that AI cannot currently provide. However, there have been some serious attempts to get AI to evaluate the aesthetic qualities of images – such as the Excire software discussed elsewhere in this newsletter.

We generally accept that judges have opinions based on their experiences, preferences, photographic knowledge, etc., and that they vary in their ability to provide constructive feedback on images. We could view AI systems similarly - they are not perfect, and the feedback they provide depends on how they were 'trained'; but they can be helpful. If you look beyond the shortcomings (which are sure to diminish in the near future), AI image critiques can help you consider possibilities and try new things. It can be fun to find that AI sees things that you did not see in your image or expresses feedback in a way that you would not use to express your opinion of an image.

Here is a challenge for you. Write a critique of the following image and email it to me. [No cheating - don't get AI to generate the critique!]. Next month, I will provide a summary of the critiques that are sent to me (no names will be published!), and I will provide an AI-generated critique of the image.



PSA Journal

The March issue of the PSA Journal is available now and the PDF can be downloaded from the PSA website.

QUOTES

If you enjoy quotes about photography, you might find this site interesting - it attempts to explain the meaning behind some famous quotes: <https://aestheticsofphotography.com/10-master-quotes-on-photography-explained/>

An AI approach to image management

Roy Killen, APSA, GMPSA, EFIAP

Unlike many other photographers, I have never really liked the cataloguing feature in Lightroom, and that is one of the reasons why my workflow usually involves downloading images to a hard drive and viewing them in Adobe Bridge, from which I import images to Photoshop for processing. Bridge is okay as an image viewer, but when dealing with large numbers of images, it becomes very slow. I have tried a couple of other image viewers and cataloguing systems but have never been very happy with any of them. So recently I downloaded a 14-day free trial of *Excire Photo* [Excire: AI Image Management Software for Mac & PC](#). [There is also a LR plugin version.] It is designed for image management only - it does not allow any editing, but files can be transferred to Photoshop (or other programs) for editing, moved to other locations, deleted, rated, etc.

To view and work with images in *Excire*, you have to allow the software to create a database. It is a simple process of just entering the location of the images and then giving the software time to do its analysis. It does not move the files from their original location. It creates thumbnails and larger previews, analyses the images, and automatically allocates keywords and aesthetic ratings. It takes about an hour to input and prepare 30,000 images from an external drive - a process that can run in the background while you do other things. You can input images in small batches (e.g. just one directory at a time) or a full hard drive of images.

As images are entered into its database, they are automatically keyworded. AI analyses the images to determine the subject, lighting, colours, etc. The keyword system is hierarchical, so, for example, an image of a hippo will be keyworded with “Animal, Mammal, Herbivore, Hippo” and possibly other things depending on what is in the background. When people are in the image, the keywording will include terms such as “Face, Eyes open, Male, Elderly” (can you tell that was an image of me!). After images are imported, it is very easy to add additional keywords or remove AI-added keywords - either on individual images or in groups. The process is simplified by doing a “Find similar images” search before changing keywords.

When you input images from different sources (e.g. different external drives or specific folders on external drives) that are placed in separate “folders” in the database, so it is easy to work with a specific group of images if you don't want to work with all imported images simultaneously. You can have the database anywhere on your computer - I have it on a separate external SSD (which might be one of the reasons it runs so fast on my system).

One of the key features of the software is an AI-driven search function that lets you input free-form search requests such as “flowers with complementary colours”. These searches are based on AI analysis of your images, not on keywords. In my test with that prompt it took just 8 secs to search 72,000 images on two external drives and return 100 results that all matched the request.

Excire has a very good “Find people” feature that allows you to select one or more faces in an image and search for that person (or several people) in part or all of the database. It is quite good at identifying the selected person in images taken years apart. For example, it identified one of my grandchildren as the same person even though the images were taken more than eight years apart:



The program has an interesting AI feature called “Aesthetics”. It automatically assigns an aesthetics score of 1-100 to each image as it is entered in the database. The scores seem to be heavily weighted towards analysis of the lighting and composition. That aspect of the AI is obviously in early stages of development and it certainly is not sufficient reason for purchasing this software. However, it can already make some fine distinctions between the aesthetic qualities of similar images - giving you a quick way of finding some ‘gems’ that you may have previously overlooked.

The program is not cheap - AU\$330 - but I found a way to get a 15% discount (which I am happy to share with you if you send me an email). After using the trial version for several hours, I was convinced it was worth the money. I found it a breeze to dive into culling images that I had set aside for years, and I believe I got my money's worth from it in just one day. I have been using it now for several weeks and it has enabled me to sort/rate/cull a huge number of images and actually enjoy what was previously a rather tedious process.

Even if you have no intention of purchasing this software (or anything like it) it can be fun to download it and experiment with it for a few hours.

Note: I get no financial or other benefit if you purchase the product.

Some Upcoming Exhibitions

March 11, 2024 - **SOUTHERN CROSS** (2024-1082) 1 Judging, 2 Sections: 3DD: Open, Scapes; <https://www.oz3d.info/Southern%20Cross/southerncross.html>

May 11, 2024 - **OUTBACK** (2024-1074) 1 Judging, 5 Sections: PID Color: Open, People Portraits, Landscapes; PID Mono: Open; PJD: Photojournalism Digital; <https://outbackinternational.myphotoclub.com.au/>

June 1, 2024 - **TERRA AUSTRALIS** (2024-1085) 1 Judging, 6 Sections: PID Color: Open, People Portraits, From above, Seascapes; PID Mono: Open; PJD: Photojournalism Digital. <https://terraaustralis.myphotoclub.com.au/>

June 10, 2024 - **VIGEX PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINT** (2024-1147) 1 Judging, 6 sections: ND: Nature Print; PPD: Large Color Open, Large Color Creative, Large Color Scapes, Large Mono Open, Large Mono Portrait, Nature Print; <https://www.vigex.org.au>

The only exhibitions that I list here are the Australian exhibitions that have PSA recognition. A full list of upcoming PSA recognised exhibitions is available here <https://psa-photo.org/page/exh-lists>.

**Thanks to everyone who contributed to this month's newsletter.
Please send me some news or views for my next newsletter!**

If you need help with any PSA matters please contact me.

Regards,
Roy

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