

Mentor Program for Judges of Photographic Images

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Mentor Program for Judges of Photographic Images

Introduction

The Mentor Program is aimed at APJA members who wish to enhance specific areas of judging techniques at any level of competency; Intern, Licentiate, Associate, Fellow or Master. More than twenty mentor programs were examined to develop the APJA Mentor Program with The International Standards for Mentoring Programs in Employment, Running a Mentor Program: Queensland Govt. and the Australian Institute of Professional Photography providing the most useful guidelines.

The program is designed to practically expand and elevate the judge's skill set aside from the formal training program. At the outset, after the 'Introduction to Judging Workshop', participants who become members of the APJA are initially protégés until *after* they reach the Licentiate Level. However, subsequent specific knowledge about various subjects will require particular wisdom in appraising images featuring:

- . Originality
- . Cultural Aesthetics
- . Specialty Content
- . Inventiveness

Participants may also wish to obtain knowledge about judging subjects in which they have limited experience (Mentees) and conversely pass on knowledge in which they are familiar (Mentors).

True mentoring is more than just answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help, it is about an ongoing relationship of learning, dialog, and challenge.

1. Aims of the Mentoring Program

- . The aim of the mentoring program is to enhance the judging skills of APJA members by broadening, deepening and sensitising the subtlety of their understanding.
- . The program will demonstrate the power of photography to build community, national and international awareness and provide support for the issue of judging images.
- . Inclusiveness in relation to ethnicity, culture, socio-economic background and gender as appropriate to the program.

2. Momentum

Instigated by mentees in conjunction with the availability of mentors, the program may be cyclic owing to the needs of mentees and the availability of mentors. The Training Director, in conjunction with the committee of management, will monitor the progress of the program.

3. Outcomes and Benefits

The program is not a replacement for the formal training process nor a shortcut to gaining higher levels of recognized judging competency. Outcomes are designed to fill gaps in the skills/knowledge of members, construct a network between judges in their support for each other and in so doing form an informal advisory service to mentees. The benefits to members are the assurance of having quality support and to the Association of ensuring judging skills are always being improved. It provides a sense of purpose, resourcefulness, connectedness, capability and participation in the APJA culture.

4. Program Parameters

The Mentoring Program is:

- . An interactive way of learning
- . A voyage of personal discovery
- . Focused on enhancing photography knowledge and judging skills
- . A resource to ask an experienced, qualified judge questions and seek advice on judging matters

- . A forum to share your experiences with other like-minded judges
- . To meet, discuss topics and share knowledge and experience

*What the program is **not***

- . It's not a formal training program
- . It's not a means to a qualification
- . It's not a forum to air complaints
- . It's not a panacea for all judging issues

5. Mentoring Options

Methods of carrying out the mentoring program can be a mix of the following or a single component or any other option as approved by the Training Director.

- . Specific Sessions (Group or One-to-One)
- . Feedback by experienced judge to new judge at a club competition
- . Buddy system between mentor and mentee (Trainee judge - Senior judge) where competition judge shadowing occurs as part of the mix
- . Remote contact via internet, telephone or Skype
- . Tutor lectures
- . Mini assignments (Mentee researches topic [properly referenced] and reports to the mentor)
- . Networking between judges
- . Informal Training at APJA general meetings such as assessing judging assignments that are in progress
- . Photo & written assignments, photo reviews and constructive appraisals
- . Researching topics on the internet, in books, visiting photographic studios, seeing relevant movies, galleries and museums

6. Timelines

These can be quite flexible, agreed upon between the mentor and mentee but should not exceed one to four hours per month for a year. Regular, consistent contact between mentor and mentee is encouraged. If the mentor can be satisfied that the goals have been reached by the mentee before the agreed timeline is completed then closure of the mentoring should take place at this point.

7. Matching mentors and mentees

The program offers the mentor or mentee several options for a partner and allows either to choose one. Both mentors and mentees have an influence on whether they participate and with whom they agree to pair. As a guide mentors should be selected to meet the specific needs of mentees - not on the basis of popularity. The experience gap permits significant learning by the mentee.

Teaming up people with diverse experience, backgrounds and cultures is carried out with the following options:

- . Mentors and mentees fill out an information sheet (Attachments 1 & 2), this is a formalised criteria, about what they hope to offer or obtain from a mentoring relationship - matching people.
- . Matching a pair based on their interests and likes, or cultural backgrounds is achieved by comparing the comments each person has written on their application form.
- . A further option is to have 'welcome days', during which a group of mentors and mentees get together to discuss judging, have a barbeque or work on activity sheets together. At the end of the day both groups nominate who they got along with best and are matched according to their preferences.

8. Mismatches

- . The matching process is done carefully and the likelihood of a bad match is quite small, but in the event that a mentee does not get along with the mentor the Training Director must be notified by either party.
- . If a pair do not 'click', the process to identify differences in the relationship, without hurting feelings to find another match, is that a "check-up" or evaluation soon after the relationship begins will be undertaken.
- . Where it is recognised that a match does not work then it will be unwound and the participants will be reassigned. Without prejudice, if there is a serious problem, the mentee will be found a new mentor.
- . If a mentor is not found for the specific needs of a mentee then the APJA shall attempt to find a suitable mentor outside the association.

9. Mentee

. The roles of the mentee are that of student, program administrator and sharer of information. Your skills will be at various levels, but most commonly you will require learning during the protégé stages of judging, in addition to meeting the criteria of the different competency levels.

. Mentees identify the topics in which they wish to improve their knowledge.

. Mentees keep records of meetings, including notes on what was discussed and what the outcomes were. They should summarise the discussion and record any actions that need to be taken.

. Mentees must be prepared to commit the time for group meetings (where applicable) and any additional activities or tasks. You must have a flexible schedule and be willing to devote necessary time to complete the program and follow instructions provided to you. (See Attachment 2)

. Participation is the key to your success.

a. **Be proactive: Don't expect to be mothered.** Your involvement is crucial and your opinion important.

b. **Think of useful questions:** These are the backbone of any session. Understand that mentoring is not like a course where you sit and listen. It is more a case of being guided through your own thinking and reaching an outcome that is plausible and relevant to you.

c. **Be organised:** Mentoring includes you discussing the work that you have done between sessions. Present the task well. Be articulate and to the point.

d. **Have a team spirit:** Since some sessions may be shared with other mentees, it is important that you get involved.

e. **Reciprocate:** Be willing to share your knowledge and experiences with others.

10. Mentor

. Your roles are that of sensitive, nuanced advisor to provide the mentee with the training they have identified for themselves. A well-chosen mentor provides guidance, wisdom, support, counsel, perspective, expertise and coaching over a sustained period of time. Your skills will include good communication and leadership skills.

. Needs to engender confidence in a mentee who should be comfortable raising a range of issues without worrying about repercussions.

. The APJA will leave it up to each individual mentor as to how active they wish to be.

. Any experienced APJA member who's willing to be a mentor can submit their information. (See Attachment 1)

. Should not over extend themselves coaching mentees - set a realistic number of mentees in your 'team'. You may only wish to mentor one person at a time but if several mentees have a similar interest then consider taking on a small group.

11. Management of the program

- . Establish agreements, enabling, and closure. In the preparation phase, the mentor and mentee will have a conversation about their expectations, confidentiality, and the boundaries of the relationship.
- . In the establishing agreements phase, the mentor helps the mentee work out a plan, with clear tasks, for achieving his or her goal. A timetable could include weekly, bi-weekly or monthly phone or in-person meetings.
- . The mentor supports the mentee in following his or her plan as well as provides feedback and accountability.
- . Closure is a planned ending to the relationship when the mentee has achieved the agreed goals.

12. Mentees Goals

- . Mentees choose their own self-directed goals (Matching mentor to mentee to achieve the goals). The goals should be written down with a timeline. Once you have chosen your goal/s then you and your mentor define them and then custom design your path to achieve them together.
- . The mentor and mentee should decide how they will track the progress of their goals, and how they will know when they have achieved them prior to final evaluation.
- . Your mentorship begins with a comprehensive discussion, analysis and overview of your skills along with an assessment of personal and artistic development: where you are, where you've been and most importantly, where you want to be.
- . As a means of helping you identify options for your mentorship, they may include, but are not restricted to the following:
 - .The many ways to capture motion and its composition
 - .Recognizing creativity in images aside from the experimental
 - .Uncovering your artistic direction
 - .Expanding your understanding of the artistic process(specifics)
 - .Appraising bodies of work, looking for threads and themes
 - .Portfolio building or review (appraising images)
 - .Preparing the submission of photographs for publication
 - .Researching gallery or exhibition spaces
 - .Ongoing review of your artistic development and as a judge
 - .Custom photo assignments and exercises

- .Develop an understanding of the variety of ways in which photography can function as a means of personal expression and as a documentary record
- .Image review and critique of assignments, based upon your personal goals
- .Image editing and corrections, using for example, Bridge, Lightroom, Photoshop, Enzyme, Irfanview, Elements, Picasa, Microsoft Vista, Gimp, Fast Stone, Nik, Perfect Photo Suite or iPhoto
- .Lighting (Studio and outdoors) for portraiture
- .Shared photo shoots with your mentor
- .Technical advice and training (Such as review and analysis of the camera, computer, software, printer)
- .Fine-tuning/refining your darkroom or digital printing skills
- .Elements of an image:
 - Exposure (Good and bad but can they still be appropriate)
 - Lighting (Good, bad and its application)
 - Focus (The circumstances for its variations)
 - Sharpness (Techniques and over-sharpening)
 - Blur (Its uses and its misuses)
 - Composition (Geometric structure, Gestalt, Pre-Raphaelite, Colour, Cultural, Meaningful space) and its misunderstandings
 - Colour - Optical/Visual (Contrasts of size, cold/warm, triadic, harmony, brightness, primary, secondary, tertiary and neutral)
 - Colour Symbolism (Nature, emotions and spiritual contexts)
 - Colour (Effects upon people)
 - Colour (Additive and subtractive)
 - Colour (Weak colour, over saturation, over use of HDR)
 - Camera craft (Distractions - Hot spots, glare, reflections, backgrounds, backlighting, not level)
- . Genres:
 - Landscape (How is it defined, what does it include or not include or should it all be 'scenery')
 - 'Scapes (Seascapes, urban, sky)
 - Portraits
 - Wildlife/Nature
 - Creative/Experimental
 - Monochrome, Black & White
 - Photojournalism
 - Set subjects and Open subject.

13. Evaluation

To determine if the mentee has reached their goal/satisfaction the following is to take place:

- . Group reviews or
- . One to one interviews or
- . Program evaluation by feedback form to continually improve the process (Attachment 3) or
- . Engage in informed, analytical self-reflection in a presentation or
- . Peer feedback

14. Administration

The Training Director, together with an assistant, will administer the program. This can be a passive role as the mentees will drive the program through their ongoing participation and enthusiasm. Where there is a change in the circumstances of either the mentee or mentor (Moving to a different location or interstate for example) then new arrangements should be managed by the Training Director.

15. Confidentiality, Code of Conduct & Ethics

- . Mentor and mentee are respectful of each others role.
- . Mentor and mentee shall not disclose differences that lead to re-assigning to a different person.
- . When research work takes place then acknowledging references is required.
- . The program is not about 'winners' it is about learning and every endeavour should be made to encourage and support the mentee to reach their goal/s.

16. Communication to engage the Mentor Program

Carried out through the Newsletter, word of mouth, formal seminars, through the APJA Website and application to the Training Director.