

Photo Critiques



Coastal Photo Club
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Critique vs Criticism

Definitions of Critique

- ❖ a careful judgment in which you give your opinion about the good and bad parts of something (such as a piece of writing or a work of art) ⁽¹⁾

Source: (1) Merriam-Webster online Dictionary - Definition of critique for English Language Learners

Definitions of Critique

- ❖ a careful judgment in which you give your opinion about the good and bad parts of something (such as a piece of writing or a work of art) ⁽¹⁾
- ❖ A detailed analysis and assessment of something, especially a literary, philosophical, or political theory. ⁽²⁾

Source: (1) Merriam-Webster online Dictionary - Definition of critique for English Language Learners

(2) Oxford English online Dictionary

Photo Critique

(AS I SEE IT)

A detailed analysis and assessment in which you:

- ❖ offer how and why a photo impacts you;
- ❖ give your opinion about what you see as good and bad elements of a photo;
- ❖ offer suggestions for possible changes to help the photo have the desired impact.

Photo Critique

We'll Talk About

- ❖ understanding of the photographer and photo
- ❖ first impression - impact
- ❖ facts vs opinions
- ❖ the detailed analysis of a photo
- ❖ sharing your thoughts without criticism
- ❖ need to understand art is subjective

Understand the Photographer and the Photo

- ❖ Photographers skill level
- ❖ Photographers normal area of interest
- ❖ What genre does the photo fall within?



200mm f-4.5



200mm *f*-10

First Impression

- ❖ What was your first impression?
- ❖ Why do you think you had that impression
- ❖ Is there a clear subject
- ❖ Where do your eyes go - why
- ❖ Is there a story, do you want to know more, is there a sense of wonder
- ❖ Make mental note for now

Fact vs Opinion

FACT

- ❖ Horizon is in the center of the photo
- ❖ photo is in portrait orientation
- ❖ photo is cropped 4x5 ratio
- ❖ photo is printed on mat paper

OPINION

- ❖ Horizon should be on the upper or lower third
- ❖ photo would work better if it was landscape orientation
- ❖ photo is cropped too tight
- ❖ if printed on semi-gloss paper it would look better

The Detailed Analysis Technical

- ❖ Is the exposure / metering correct (any significant blown out highlights or blocked up shadows)
- ❖ Sharpness - are items that should be in focus in focus
- ❖ Depth of field suit the photo (landscape everything sharp)
- ❖ Is there evidence of dirt on the lens
- ❖ Colors realistic (skin tones, are white items white)
- ❖ Focal Length (is the image overly compressed or overly expanded)
- ❖ Lighting - was it a good time of day, shadows, etc.
- ❖ Background - is it too busy or include distracting elements (look behind the main subject)

The Detailed Analysis

Artistic / Composition

- ❖ Does the orientation work for the image
- ❖ How is the crop and aspect ratio
- ❖ Balance (foreground, middle, and background elements)
- ❖ Use of negative space
- ❖ “Rule” of thirds

The Detailed Analysis

Artistic / Composition

- ❖ Flat or contrasty (level of post processing)
- ❖ Are there extra items that don't enhance the image (every item in the image either adds to or detracts from the photo)
- ❖ Are any items missing? (fingers, feet, eyes of birds, ball, puck, etc.)
- ❖ Check the edges...are there any items sneaking in along the border

Giving Feedback

- ❖ Point out any bias you might have
- ❖ Talk about the photo
 - ❖ what was your first reaction - why
 - ❖ what did you see as the main subject, etc.
- ❖ Discuss technical aspects, start with the positive move to the negative (speak to your audience)
- ❖ Articulate why you like / dislike something...give suggestions
- ❖ Understand that all suggestions might not be practical
- ❖ Be honest, open and frank but do it in a helpful manner

Why it's Important

- ❖ **Properly Given Critique** - can inspire both technical and artistic growth in the photographer
- ❖ **Improperly Given Critique** - can harm self-esteem and hinder further development

Some Final Thoughts

If you are just beginning your photography journey and looking for critiques, I suggest you avoid online communities. While you might get some valuable input, much of what you get will be from people who like to criticize other people's work to make themselves seem important.

A photo critique done by a person with knowledge, given in a constructive way, can help both the person giving and receiving the critique