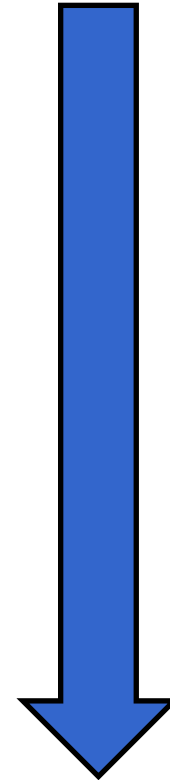SOLIHULL PHOTOGRAPHIC Society

WHAT MAKES A GOOD COMPETITION IMAGE?

Bob Breach

TYPES OF COMPETITION

- Internal club
- Interclub
- Regional/National
  - e.g. SPS Open, Midphot
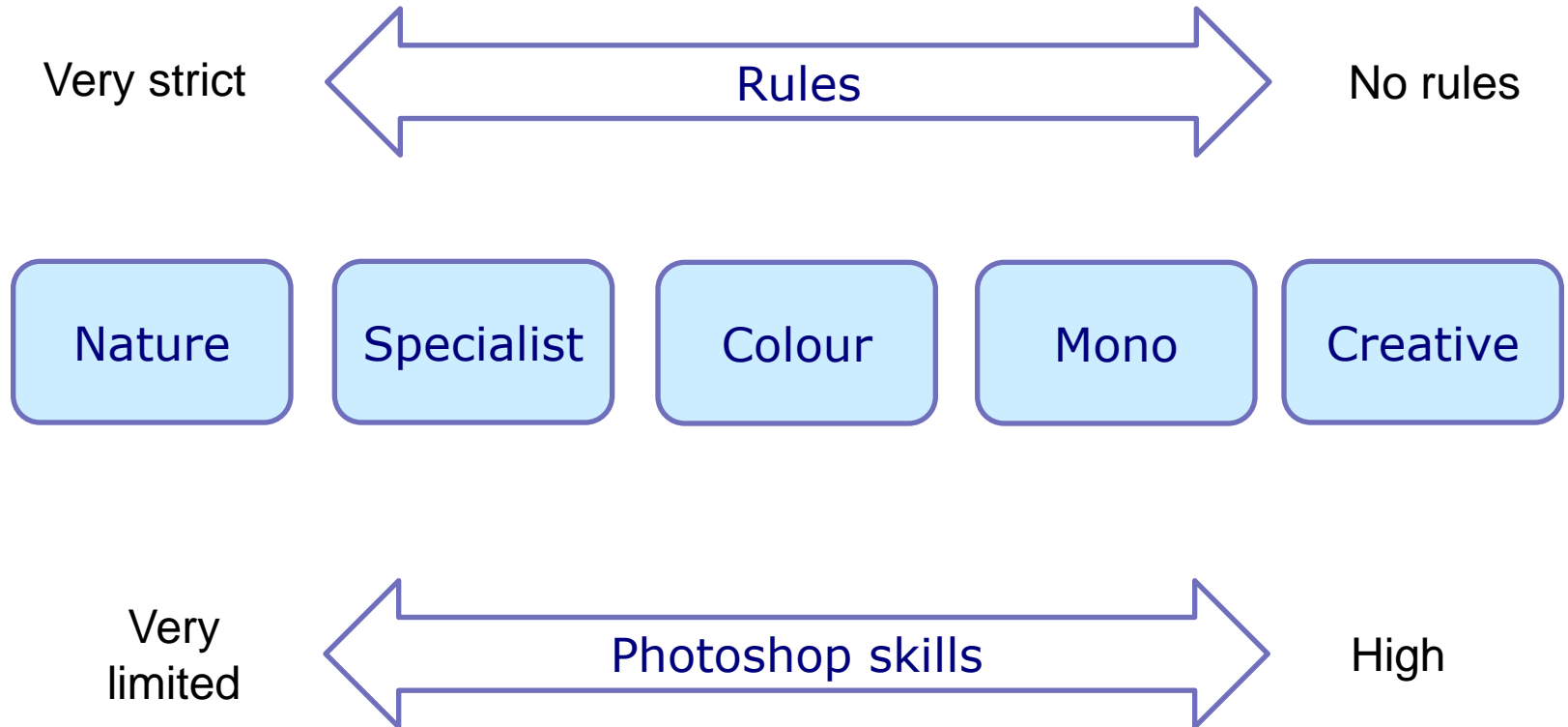- Specialist e.g. RPS groups
- International

Difficulty of acceptance

HOW ARE COMPETITIONS JUDGED

- Club and interclub competitions
  - Typically have 50-80 images
  - Usually have only one judge who has time to study and comment on each image
- National and international competitions
  - Typically have thousands of entries to judge
  - Usually by a panel of three judges who each score an image in around 10-20 seconds
  - The scores are added and have to pass a certain mark to be "accepted"
  - Judges on the "circuit" will see tens of thousands of images each year
  - As well as overall image quality, the immediate impact (and novelty) of the image is therefore also important

COMPETITION RULES VARY

Very strict ⟵ **Rules** ⟶ No rules

Nature	Specialist	Colour	Mono	Creative

Very limited ⟵ **Photoshop skills** ⟶ High

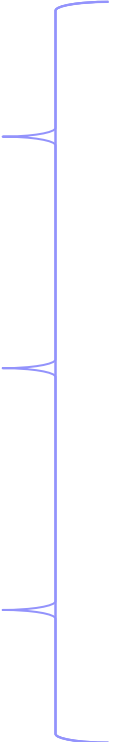*Always check the rules before entry*

WHAT DO JUDGES LOOK FOR?

- Depends a lot on the judge !
- As we all do, each judge will have personal views on what they like
- But there are some basics which most look for

The right location, time of day and composition can only be secured at image capture stage – but improvements can also be made in post production

STAGES IN PREPARING COMPETITION ENTRIES

- **Image capture**
  - What, where, when
  - Composition
- **Image selection**
  - Which will do well in which competition
- **Post production**
  - How can I improve the image I have
    - Basic techniques
    - Complex techniques

Anthony Pioli Notes will help all of these

DOES THE IMAGE CREATE A MOOD OR EMOTION IN THE VIEWER?

"Mood is ultimately what sucks the viewer in and separates a good photo from a great photos - it's what takes us from sitting at our desk, standing in a gallery, or browsing through a magazine rack and places us firmly within the frame. We're there. We're feeling what their feeling, we're seeing what they are seeing.
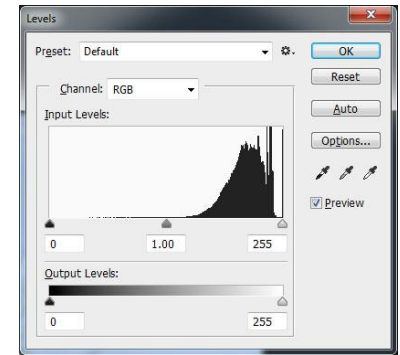
HOW DO YOU CREATE MOOD IN YOUR PICTURES?

- Understand what creates mood in your images and train yourself to "see moody opportunities" whenever you are out with the camera
- Identify the best weather/time of day/location for your external images
- What are you trying to show in the picture? What is the main point of interest?
  - A mood or emotion
  - A story that you can buy into
  - Something that makes you look twice
  - People in their environment or in a dramatic situation – the right lighting helps
  - An animal in a dramatic environment or showing a striking behaviour
- Look for *different* images, *unusual angles*, *striking poses*, or *dramatic lighting*
- Avoid clichés, "chocolate box" or "record shot" pictures
- If you cannot capture in camera can you potentially create or enhance the right mood in post processing

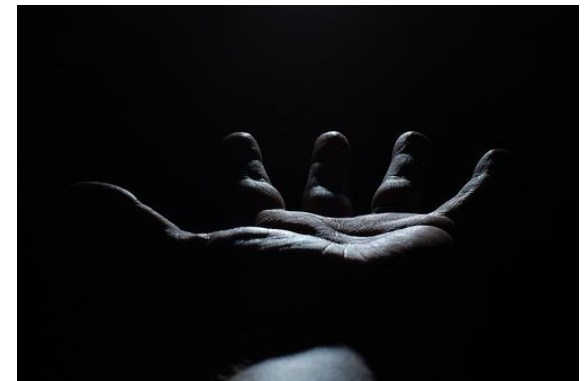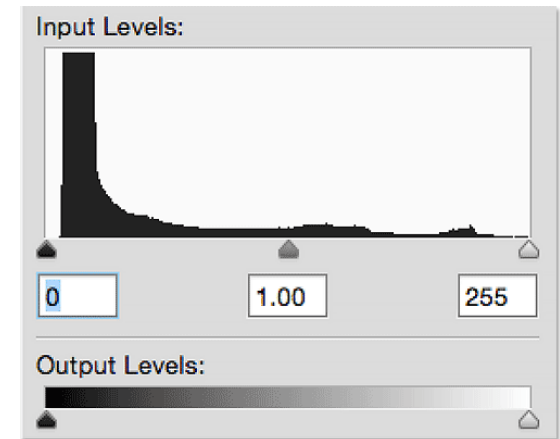Will the viewer be able to see what you saw in the picture?

HIGH KEY LIGHTING

- A high key image is one that is mostly bright, with a range of light tones and whites and not very many blacks or mid-tones
- A high key image tends to be upbeat, optimistic or youthful
- Often also used with an added diffuse layer or less saturation to create a soft mood

LOW KEY LIGHTING

- A low-key image is one that contains predominantly dark tones and colours
- Conveys atmosphere and mood which is usually dramatic and full of mystery
- Creates striking contrasts through reduced lighting where shadows are now the primary element of the composition
- Can work with colour but often better with mono

FINISHING TOUCHES

- Remove distracting elements or dust spots
- Use sharpening if necessary (but sparingly)
- For print
  - Decide on which paper is best for image
  - Make sure you use the correct colour profile
  - Make sure the mage is resized properly
  - Do a small test print before the final version
- For DPI
  - Make sure that the image is in s RGB colour space
  - Add border if required
  - Resize to correct dimensions (e.g. 1400x1050 pixels)
  - Fill "spare" area in canvas using black

When you think you have finished

Put the image aside for a few days and then come back and look at it again with a critical eye