A Qualitative Study of the Judging of Photographic Restoration in PPA Competition

by

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In 2019, the Professional Photographers of America (PPA) added "Photographic Restoration" as a new category within the artist division for both district competitions and the International Photographic Competition (IPC). According to PPA events and IPC manager Rich Newell, a board member involved in that decision explained the board's rationale this way: "When we created the two categories it was discussed that the degree had two clear lanes and that it really would not be fair to put a technical piece up against a creative piece. We wanted to honor both lanes" (Newell). Presumably, this applied also to the award categories involved in the Grand Imaging Awards (GIA).

My experience as a restoration artist and a PPA juror-in-training from 2018 until now has led me to reflect deeply on those differences and analyze the implications. While teaching photographic restoration to PPA affiliates around the country over the last several years, I have addressed the difference that the board member pointed out, using the concepts shown in Figure 1, where "creative" fits the art side of the Venn diagram, and "technical" fits the restoration side.

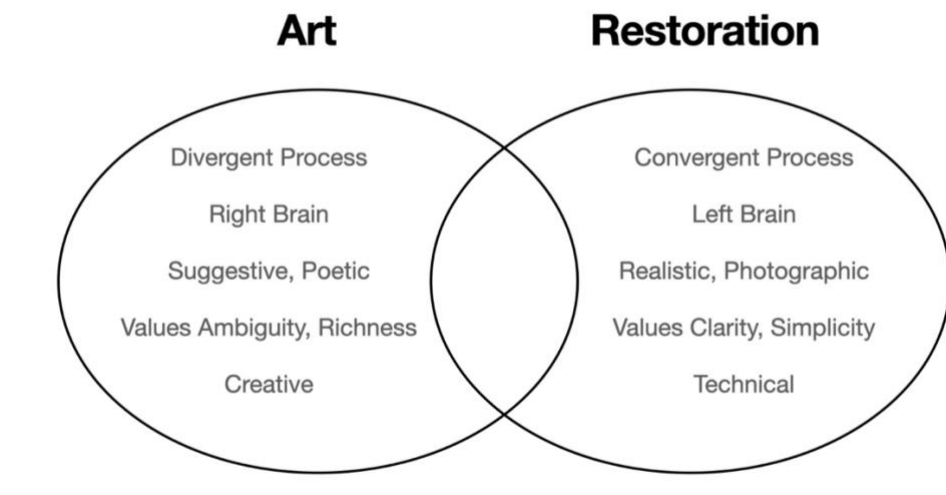|	Art	Restoration	
	Divergent Process	Convergent Process	
	Right Brain	Left Brain	
	Suggestive, Poetic	Realistic, Photographic	
	Values Ambiguity, Richness	Values Clarity, Simplicity	
	Creative	Technical	

Fig. 1: The differences between art and restoration

The dramatic distinction between the two categories suggests that restorations should be evaluated very differently from how other artist entries are judged. This study intends to explore how restoration artists and approved PPA jurors approach photographic restorations; to clarify the evaluative criteria they use, particularly as they relate to the twelve elements of a merit image (12 Elements); and to make some recommendations to support the growth of this new category, as well as the judging of it. I hope to start constructive conversations on how PPA might evaluate the effectiveness of photo restorations in more valid and reliable ways so that restoration artists receive the feedback they need to improve their craft.

Two-Phase Research Design

With the assistance of David Jackson, retired founder and CEO of Jackson Organization Research Consultants Inc., in the spring of 2021 I designed a two-phase qualitative research project[1], which included individual surveys followed by focus groups, as discussed in *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (Morgan). Each phase of the study would include both restoration artists and approved PPA jurors. The surveys would gather preliminary anonymous perspectives on the evaluation of photographic restorations, uncover assumptions — mine as well as those of artists and jurors — and identify important topics and perspectives to explore more deeply in the subsequent focus groups. How artists and jurors apply the twelve elements to their tasks would represent a primary focus.

Morgan explains that "…focus groups could… serve as a source of follow-up data to assist the primary method. For instance, they might be used to pursue poorly understood survey results…" (3). He adds, "The simplest test of whether focus groups are appropriate for a research project is to ask how actively and easily the participants would discuss the topic of interest" (17). In this case, both groups — restoration artists and PPA-approved jurors — had already expressed keen interest in the study and its results.

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[1] Because of the small population involved in the study, a quantitative study was inappropriate. Additionally, a qualitative design matches the exploratory purpose of the project.

Explanation of the design of each phase, the data that emerged in each, and analysis of that data follow. The final section explores implications and recommendations from the study as a whole.

Phase One: Surveys

The study included two surveys to explore how restoration artists and approved PPA jurors score sample restorations (drawn from various volunteer artists); how they regard the level and relevance of damage to the originals; the generic criteria that occur to them as they score; and how they feel the twelve elements factor into their evaluations. Mr. Jackson, Carl Caylor, IPC Committee Chair, and Bob Coates, approved PPA and artist-qualified juror, offered their feedback on the surveys prior to revision and administration of them.[2]

In late summer 2021, all approved PPA jurors (approximately seventy-six) and all restoration artists that had been identified as having entered restorations in PPA competitions from 2018–21 received invitations to participate. Fifteen restoration artists

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[2] To address concerns that restoration artists had expressed over the last several years, their survey included questions about their engagement with PPA streaming competitions, how they felt about the number and content of challenges to restoration entries, and how much they felt observing competition benefited their learning and growth. Because this study addresses different priorities, we will not delve into those areas except where they touch on more relevant matters.

and twenty-three jurors accepted and completed surveys online from October to November 2021 through SurveyMonkey.com[3] (Artist Survey; Juror Survey[4]).

As mentioned earlier, because the number of responses to the surveys was low, they could not yield statistically reliable results; however, that was never the intention. As phase one of a qualitative study, they would explore artists' and jurors' perspectives on a handful of key topics, identify important areas of possible confusion on evaluating restorations (especially where the twelve elements were concerned), and suggest topics of conversation for the subsequent focus groups.[5]

Despite the population's small size, the two groups represented in the survey reflected many years of experience and high qualification. Among the restoration artists, eleven held the Master of Photography (M.Photog) degree and five held the Master Artist (M.Artist) degree. Only two participants from that group had yet to earn a degree. Over the last three years, the artist participants had submitted at least thirty-nine restorations to IPC, of which at least twenty-one were placed in the General Collection or higher.

The twenty-three-member juror group included three M.Artists, one Master of Electronic Imaging, and five who qualified as jury chairs; of course, all approved jurors

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[3] Interestingly, several approved jurors expressed concerns that their participation may be inappropriate unless the Juror Excellence Committee (JEC) and International Photographic Competition Committee (IPCC) approved beforehand. When the chairs of both committees were asked about this, neither felt this was something the committees needed to do; nor were they willing to go on record as officially sanctioning the study. Both, however, participated in the survey and were very encouraging about the project.

[4] The two surveys were identical in most respects, with the exception of one section in the artists' survey that explored their perspectives on challenges in competition.

[5] Summaries of the responses to both surveys are referenced in works cited.

held the M.Photog degree and the Certified Professional Photographer credential, a requirement of the position. Even more impressive, they represented vast experience as PPA-approved jurors, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: How many years have you served as an approved juror?

Number of Years	Responses	
1–3	21.74%	5
4–9	13.04%	3
10–19	34.78%	8
20 or more	30.43%	7
TOTAL		23

Source: Question 2 (Juror Survey).

One early question that the survey posed to both groups was, "How confident do you feel, generally, in scoring restorations in competition?" Table 2 summarizes both groups' responses, showing, understandably, that the jurors expressed greater confidence.

Table 2: Confidence in scoring restorations in competition.

Answer Choices	Artists	Jurors: No Specialty	Jurors: Artist Specialty

Very insecure	6.67%	1	7.69%	1	0.00%	0
Somewhat insecure	46.67%	7	15.38%	2	0.00%	0
Somewhat confident	40.00%	6	53.85%	9	50.00%	2
Very confident	6.67%	1	23.08%	3	50.00%	2

Source: Question 33 (Juror Survey) and Question 8 (Artist Survey).

While the difference between the restoration artist and juror groups on this should surprise no one, this profile did raise several questions to address in the later focus groups. For example, does the confidence of those in the "somewhat" and "very confident" categories represent reliable competence? That is, would the same number of jurors who expressed confidence (sixteen of twenty-three) prove to have similar views later when scoring actual restorations and comparing notes with their peers? As for the artists, to what extent did the high percentage of "insecure" evaluators make it more difficult for them to understand the scores they receive in competition or assess the quality of their own work? Does their profile reflect any deeper concerns that we should identify and try to address?

Because a common justification jurors offer when opposing a merit vote during a challenge is "There's not enough damage to the original," the first major section of both surveys asked participants to rate the "merit-worthiness" of nine photos and documents that represent a range of typical pieces (with damage on a spectrum from minor, to subtle but challenging, to severe and obvious) brought by clients for restoration and also entered

in competition. Following these ratings, the survey asked participants, "Based on your responses to the previous items, what kinds of damage qualify an original to be merit worthy?"

In both groups, the majority of respondents (nine of fifteen artists and sixteen of twenty-three jurors) drew the line at obvious major damage, such as rips, stains, and missing portions of important subjects requiring reconstruction that could not be done with the simple use of such tools as adjustment layers, the clone stamp, or healing brush. They expected to see a need for more skillful reconstruction and were ambivalent on whether fading and loss of focus and detail were sufficient to be considered for merit. This would be important to explore in the focus groups.

Both groups also included some participants (three of fifteen artists and seven of twenty-three jurors) who pushed back at the underlying assumption that one could or even should view restoration originals in this way. Their view held that merit-worthiness lies only in the transformation an artist achieves; the difference between the original and the finished restoration. One commented, "…Without seeing the finished image, I am only guessing at the complexity [of the work required]." Another even remarked, "…All of the [nine samples] might achieve merit depending on the success of the restoration."

That last comment suggested that effectively restoring more subtle damage may pose a great enough challenge to display the artist's skill; but would this be appreciated by a majority of jurors? This same notion appeared in the artists' responses, where five said that such challenges as fading, loss of focus and detail, and extreme color shifting require skilled restoration worthy of merit consideration. This contrasted with the jurors' responses, where several indicated specifically that such damage was insufficient.

The next section of both surveys presented seven of the same originals paired with restored versions and asked participants to score them as "not merit," "merit," or "image excellence." This task approximated the initial individual scoring that jurors perform in competition, representing what observers see in the streaming event and before a preliminary final score is announced (except that, in this case, the scoring was untimed) and challenges can be raised.

On four of the seven restorations, artists cast votes at all three score points, equally distributed; the remaining three split between two adjacent scores, and only one of these was nearly unanimous (for not merit).

The jurors' scores fell in a generally tighter distribution, as seen in Table 3. One vote proved unanimous for not merit; three votes fell in the not merit and merit categories; and three spanned all three categories. Clearly, four to five of the restoration scores reflected a marked difference of opinion and suggested that jurors' evaluative standards differ enough to confirm the importance of challenges in competition. Further, it raised the question of whether the new system of "not merit," "merit," and "image excellence" makes it harder for jurors to see when their evaluation differs enough from their peers that they should challenge.[6]

Table 3: Jurors' scores of seven restorations.

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[6] The Jury Charge video reminds jurors, "Whenever there is a distinct discrepancy between your evaluation and that of the jury, you are duty bound to challenge that entry" (Jury Charge 00:02:57).

Entry	Not Merit	Merit	Image Excellence
Document 1	11	12	0
Portrait 1	23	0	0
Portrait 2	12	11	0
Portrait 3	6	17	0
Document 2	2	16	5
Portrait 4	1	10	12
Snapshot	10	12	0

Source: Questions 23–29 (Juror Survey).

Document 1 and Portrait 2 showed the greatest disagreement and so became two of the restorations used later in the focus groups.

Next, the survey asked participants to rate the extent to which each of the twelve elements factored into their scores on the previous restorations. Figure 2 presents the weighted average of the jurors' responses; the artists responded very similarly. As one would expect, technical expertise (i.e., excellence), technique, and difficulty/execution scored highly; however, elements such as composition, center of interest, subject matter, color balance, and style — which seem to lie out of the restoration artist's control — also

seemed significant. While the twelve elements represent guidelines rather than laws for judging competition entries, this raised questions about how respondents define each and how they might apply uniquely to photographic restorations, especially compared to entries in the "Artist Open" category.
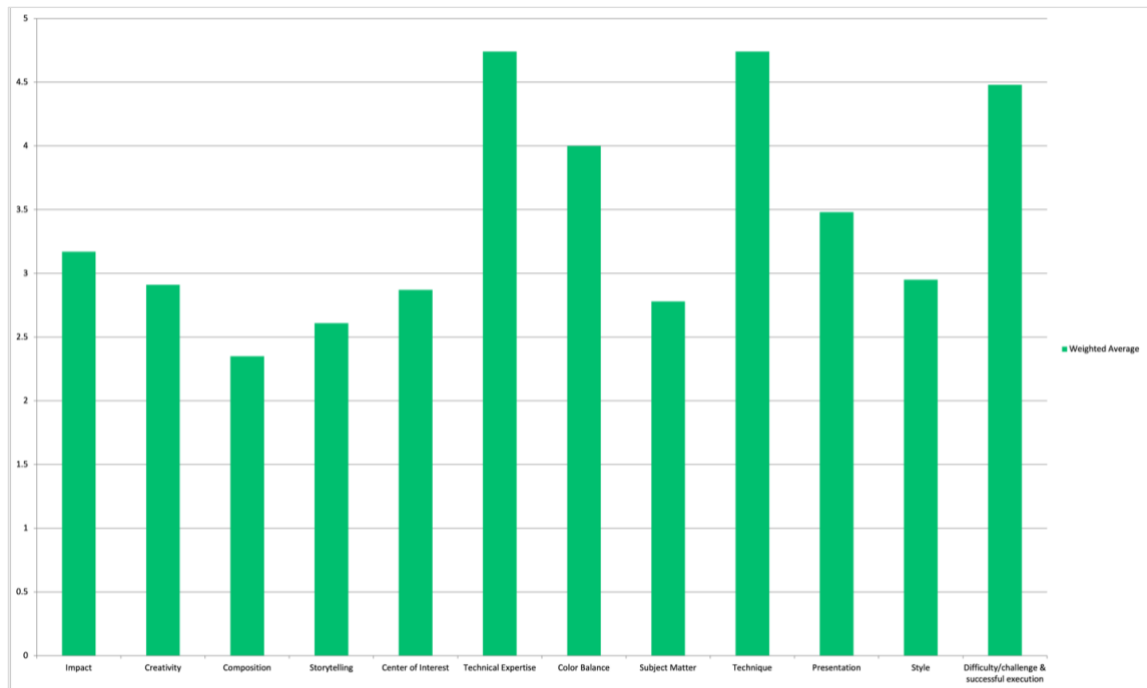

Fig. 2: Question 30 (Juror Survey).

Perhaps the answers to a later question can help with this: "Overall, do you find the twelve elements as useful in evaluating restorations as they are in evaluating other competition categories?" Table 4 provides the artists' and jurors' responses. Considered together, views from both groups on how the twelve elements apply to evaluating restorations suggested confusion and a need for clarification, and it also implied that scoring in this category may be more subjective and idiosyncratic than other categories. It would be important to address this in the focus groups and to gain clarification.

Table 4: How useful the twelve elements are in evaluating restorations compared to other

categories.

Answer Choices	Artist Responses		Juror Responses	
Not at all	20.00%	3	0.00%	0
Very little or of limited help	13.33%	2	0.00%	0
Somewhat helpful, but problematic or confusing	33.33%	5	52.17%	12
Very helpful, and similar to scoring entries in other categories	33.33%	5	30.43%	7
They are all useful equally	0.00%	0	17.39%	4
Totals		15		23

Source: Question 31 (Artist Survey); Question 35 (Juror Survey).

Certainly, jurors could benefit from conversation and even professional development on this topic, and their responses to one of the final survey questions confirmed this. When asked, "Do you think that approved jurors would [benefit] from continuing conversation and education on how to score restoration entries?" all of the artists and all but one of the jurors said yes.

Phase Two: Focus Groups

After analyzing the responses to both surveys, focus groups were planned and scheduled for each of the participant groups[7], drawing from the pool of those who had completed surveys and volunteered for the groups. The juror group included eight members, four of whom were artist-qualified jurors and whose judging experience ranged from three years to more than twenty. The artist group consisted of five members, three of whom held the M.Artist degree. Both groups, then, consisted of highly qualified jurors and restoration artists.

This research phase involved several design considerations: the overall structure of the sessions, the moderator's role in leading them, and the interview methods to use. Of several approaches that Morgan suggests, the funnel-based interview seemed most appropriate:

> In a funnel-based interview, each group begins with a less structured approach that emphasizes free discussion and then moves toward a more structured discussion of specific questions. The funnel analogy matches an interview with a broad, open beginning and a narrower, more tightly controlled ending. This compromise makes it possible to hear the participants' own perspectives in the early part of each discussion as well

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[7] Focus groups took place in early April 2022, in Zoom sessions that were recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

as their responses to the researcher's specific interests in the later part of the discussion (41).

Accordingly, each session began with general conversation around each group's shared background and experiences participating in or judging competition. Discussion proceeded to individual scoring of three restorations chosen to elicit maximum conversation about the not merit/merit and merit/image excellence lines, followed by open sharing of participants' thoughts and experiences in scoring each. Next, conversation moved to a more tightly moderated discussion exploring the processes, priorities, and criteria they utilize in their evaluations. Finally, the groups explored how participants felt the twelve elements apply to evaluating restorations.

Because the study is focused on how and what the two groups think, the moderator attempted to remain neutral, remaining as much in the background as possible and intervening only to prompt, structure, deepen, and clarify participants' conversations. Toward that end, the methodology drew on the moderator's experience as an content literacy adult educator during the early segment of the focus group — when participants scored and discussed the three restorations — with an initial use of metacognitive conversation, an academic concept used to promote reflection and support cognitive apprenticeship.

Put simply, metacognition involves thinking about our thinking, and metacognitive conversation makes that thinking visible to others, as illustrated in Figure 3.
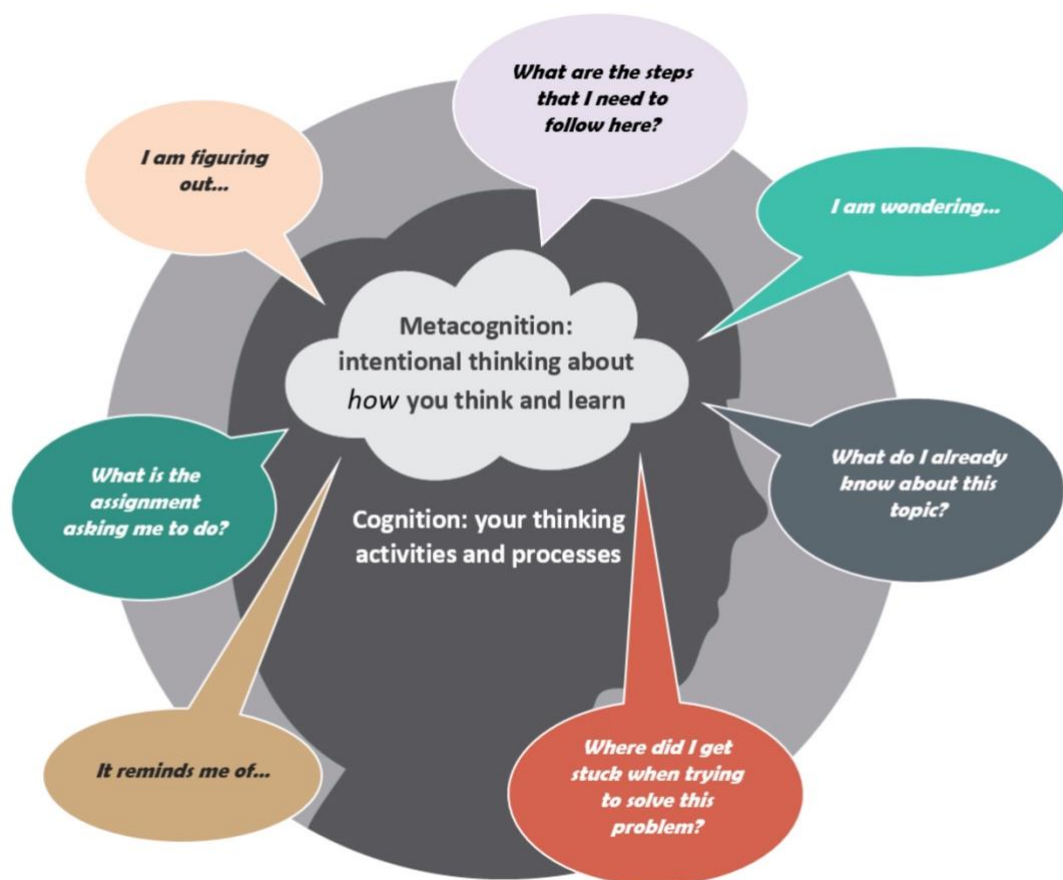
Fig. 3: Metacognition.

Metacognitive conversation represents a core process used in reading apprenticeship academic literacy, where trained teachers model how they make meaning from text and instruct their students to do the same[8] (Schoenbach 89–134). The challenge and key to success lies in helping expert readers of content area texts become aware of the strategic mental moves they make that occur automatically and subconsciously so that they can teach students to do what they do until they no longer need a teacher's assistance.

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[8] The moderator served as a certified facilitator of reading apprenticeship from 2000–15, working as lead facilitator in the National Institute for Reading Apprenticeship as well as a number of other state and local professional development programs.

This emphasis would allow participants in the focus groups to surface and share their own thinking rather than merely focus on reasons for their scores.

Through metacognitive conversation and reading apprenticeship, literacy learners progress through four well-known stages of competence — unconscious incompetence to conscious incompetence to conscience competence to unconscious competence — in the various strategies they are learning (Figure 4).

Fig. 4: Stages of competence.

Applying this model to the development of photographic expertise, in the first stage of unconscious incompetence we are not even aware of mismatches between our camera's settings and the demands of the scene we are photographing; we are unaware, for example, that incandescent light sources put a color cast on a scene, and we do not realize what we should do to overcome it. In the second stage, we become aware of what we don't know; we may realize that a photo has a yellow cast, but we are unsure of what to do about it. In the third stage, we understand and can use knowledge of white balance

with deliberation; for example, we now know to set a custom white balance in different lighting conditions, but we have to think through how and refer to notes we have made. In the final stage, we do not have to think about what to do; we notice lighting conditions and act to compensate for them in flexible ways.

This model applies to development in any discipline or task requiring skill. It pertains to growth as a photographer, an artist, and even a juror. Once skills become unconscious competencies, however, it can be difficult for the expert to bring those processes to the surface, back into their consciousness. The intent of the focus group was to make the processes of both artists and jurors visible, especially where those processes reflected unconscious competence. Of equal importance was the possibility that participants might discover any areas of unconscious incompetence and begin the process of learning.

Thus, during the early restoration scoring exercise in the focus groups, participants were asked to pay careful attention to their thinking, write personal notes on the particular things they thought while determining their score (i.e., not merit, merit, or image excellence), and then share those perspectives before disclosing their decisions. This might include what they focused on, noticed, wondered, imagined, or felt. Asking participants to do this slowed them down and enabled the moderator to probe behind *what* they did to explore how, when, and why they did these things, making their thinking visible. Having them make notes about what they remembered before speaking also put everyone on an even footing and enriched the conversation. Morgan touches on this benefit: "There is something about the process of writing things down that reinforces a person's commitment to contributing [their] thoughts to the group, even in the face of

apparent disapproval" (50). It also emphasizes the importance of trying to reveal what they do subconsciously, related to the stages of competence.

In order to remain neutral, throughout the focus group sessions the moderator attempted to restrict himself to asking questions as much as possible, using those questions to encourage open, brainstorming-style sharing; to probe deeper into participants' processes and priorities; and to ask participants to respond critically to others' perspectives. This neutrality made it easier for participants to share their thinking and speak freely; it also minimized any chance of the researcher's biases influencing the group's thinking.

As both artists and jurors shared their approaches to scoring restorations, a number of fascinating differences emerged. Some reviewers started by looking to the finished restoration to see if the work was done well enough (in their minds) to be meritorious, and they then turned to the original to see the starting point. One from the artist group (who is also a PPA juror-in-training) said that he asks himself if he likes the final restoration on its own before examining the original. Conversely, others deliberately began by examining the original to process the challenges before turning to the finished work.

Evaluators taking both approaches then looked back and forth from restoration to original repeatedly, comparing particulars and assessing the transformation from original to finished piece. They asked themselves, "What work was done?" "How much work was required and completed?" "Was the work difficult?" "Did the artist take the work far enough, or too far?" One important judgment that both groups made was whether the restorations were faithful to the originals.

The juror focus group called this important criterion "fidelity" and related it to authenticity. To them, fidelity involved avoiding distortion to details, especially faces; maintaining who the people are — a deeper issue than mere looks — inclusive of shapes, expressions, sizes, and even contrast; improving sharpness and detail; making faces look photo-realistic rather than cartoonish or flat; and remaining as true to the historical context as possible. Notably, on that last point, jurors commented that they wished the restoration of a particular historical document had retained the texture of the parchment it had been printed on rather than the featureless tone of the final piece.

The artist group speculated on the techniques the restoration artists used, asking, "How might the artist have completed the restoration?" Their list included eliminating dust and scratches; correcting stains, and water and mildew spots (ranging from easy to difficult to complete); repairing damage, especially to key areas of the main subject; adding depth via highlights and shadows; adding or enhancing sharpness and definition; and adding missing elements by compositing authentic equivalents or painting them in.

When exploring the nature of the work done in bringing the restoration to a successful completion, both groups emphasized that the quality of work must be consistent across the entire piece. Both also wondered if more work could or should be done in restoring the original.

On this point, the juror group engaged in a significant and instructive conversation. On the final restoration (Figure 5), as participants shared their processes and reasons, they expressed ambivalence over whether to place the restoration in the image excellence category or leave it in merit category.

Fig. 5: Griffiths Family, Circa 1896 (Paulis).

Their unfolding conversation reveals some important perspectives[9]:

Juror 2   Mm-hmm. Yeah. I really like the fact the faces all look like the original faces. Nothing's been distorted feature-wise. And they've…done a really good job of cleaning up all that disintegration of the dark tones in between the children there; although to me, I wouldn't go as far as imaging excellence on this one because it still looks a bit unfinished.

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[9] Speaker identifications reflect the order in which they spoke in the original transcript.

There's still—there's still some work that could be done to really bring it up a few notches. … As… [Juror 1] said, you know, there's still an awful lot of noise texture or grit in the little boys' outfits that I'm sure wasn't originally there that could be treated… a little bit more cautiously or with care. So, I think…it's a really good restoration. Is it an excellent restoration? Not quite. It's almost there but, you know, … there's a lot of—like the little stool that the boy is sitting on, …[the artist] must have brought in a piece to put in there or something. And, we're not seeing that as a guide print 'cause I don't think there's that much there to bring from the original. Same with his feet. So, it almost makes me wonder, you know, about the integrity of the [artist] because we're not seeing guide prints for those things where they really would have to come back and make those details from scratch. Or is this somebody that took … an image and kind of destroyed it and put that in as the [original]? You wonder about that when they don't put guide prints in, because where did all those details come from then? And those to me don't look like they're drawn at all. And there's nothing else in that image that I'm seeing where they could bring them from the original image and bring in that detail…. But I, I can't assume that, and I never would. But… looking at it off the judging platform, I'm wondering about that too. (00:27:45)

Several other jurors then weighed in with similar doubts and reasons to support not considering the piece for image excellence. Then one juror who had been silent spoke up.

Juror 5   Well… [exaggerated emphasis], I'd be in the image excellence category. And, you know, …I've worked on images like this. …I happen to have a firsthand knowledge of how hard it is to make that look correct, to have the right amount of contrast working there, to not lose the faces, to… bring back all the detail…. I don't have an issue with the things that come up… a little bit short. And I'm not sure that the maker didn't go in there and [draw in the details]… I see the beginnings of [those details].… I see the little circles on the thing, and I can see where that could be enhanced…. [Regarding the stool]…On a restoration, do we need to see those extra pieces coming in [to the presentation]? …On an artist image I don't have to show every single bit and piece that I have to begin with. I show you where I started, and I show you where I finished, and I may show you some of the pieces. But… I don't see that as a requirement.… Even if they did recreate that chair, which I don't believe they did, … but even if they did recreate it… with another photograph and … [composited] it in, it was done very, very well. (00:32:04)

            [Picking up slightly later in the conversation]

Moderator   …What [affect] did that conversation have on your thinking? …If this were… a challenge you just engaged in… did your view change through hearing each other's perspectives? (00:34:54)

Juror 5   Yeah, I got more cemented. [laughter].… When I heard what the objections were, I went totally in the other direction and went, "No, I've-- I'm really now even more-- now that you've brought that up and I've seen

what happened there, I'm even more convinced that… my initial feeling was correct in this particular case. (00:35:29)

Juror 1   If this were a challenge for image excellence, I definitely would've been persuaded by [Juror 5's] commentary…. (00:35:56)

Juror 6   If [Juror 2] would've been the vocal one without [Juror 5] to counteract that, we all would've listened to [Juror 2]. (00:36.44)

Several key points merit emphasis here. From the start, the jurors tended to set a very high bar for image excellence. Until Juror 5 stepped in, they were pointing out perceived flaws and shortcomings, almost as if image excellence required perfection. Their comments indicated that, because they felt more could be done in the restoration, they could not place it in the image excellence category. Even though some indicated that they would never say so during a competition, several also found themselves questioning the integrity of the artist because they were unsure how the maker accomplished the work that was done.[10] Assumptions about what the artist had done, how it was accomplished, and even the source of the improved detail seemed to lead to suspicion, which, coupled with an expectation of perfection, nearly resulted in a lower score.

At another point in the discussion about a different restoration, the jurors addressed the concept of "degree of difficulty." One questioned, "Is there really that much degree of difficulty?" to which another answered:

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[10] For the record, the artist who completed the restoration being discussed did not use any outside elements, but painted them in.

We have to be really careful about that.… I think I've seen merit work go by that did not score a merit due to the [opinion], "Well, that's not really that hard." …Go ahead and work on this and see how long it takes to do this.… Just because it's not a hard thing to do doesn't mean it wasn't difficult to complete.… I just throw that out there because I've heard this on a regular basis, and that's something that…I've become concerned about.… Sometimes the work is done so exquisitely and so [the opinion is], "Oh, well. Of course, that was easy" (Transcript 20:32).

The last comment clearly implied that a job done well may be overlooked as being too easy to deserve the merit, let alone a score of image excellence. The level of difficulty and the transformational amount of work done may be underestimated.

The artist group also discussed degree of difficulty and expressed concern that jurors not experienced at restoration might not be able to recognize or appreciate the challenges involved, particularly if they have little or no experience with performing restoration. Jurors seemed to confirm this when they expressed uncertainty over understanding how the artists accomplished their tasks; and in light of that, they tended to undervalue the work that had been done.

The artists also wondered: Should a restoration be penalized for photographic weaknesses in the original? Is it fair to down-score a restoration because the artist didn't correct what we perceive to be flaws in the original capture? Conversation from some of the jurors suggested that they would expect the artist to make such corrections, which raises the question, "Where do we draw the line when evaluating fidelity to the original?" Both groups valued this highly as an evaluative criterion.

On this issue, the artist group also explored the role of artistic license in restoration, grappling with whether colorizing monochromatic images, replacing objects, or just adding new ones were allowable. Both groups seemed to agree that the artist is free — when an element of an original is so obscured or damaged that it cannot be reconstructed — to composite in a plausible replacement, especially when the replacement is historically authentic. Both groups also found colorization to be an appropriate liberty open to artists since many clients request it.

One intriguing perspective arose in both groups as they shared their scoring processes. Because they tended to appreciate the finished piece before examining the original, the presentation layout mattered. If the original was positioned on the left side of a landscape layout, they found themselves "distracted" by first seeing the original; the same proved true for portrait layouts that placed the original at the top. The artist group also explored how presentation affects impact, sharing their individual preferences on using frames, single keystrokes, and double keystrokes, as well as remarking on changing scoring trends in that area.

Both groups raised one final question: What role does impact (regarding one of the twelve elements) of the original image play in the overall impact of the entry? That is, do older, more classic photographs bring a higher score than, say, ones that are more modern and even have the feel of a snapshot? Participants suspected that the former do fare better in competition. The jurors' conversation about judging digital documents reflected this same notion. This does seem to be an unfair bias that merits further conversation.

In the free-flowing conversations of both groups, both jurors and artists grew more uncomfortable, if not insecure, over how to evaluate restorations, as if they had become aware of some unconscious incompetence. They emphasized how important their conversations were in opening their eyes to challenging issues, helping them render a fair score, and highlighting the importance of raising challenges during competition. They also expressed gratitude for the learning they gained from each other.

Some of the discomfort the participants expressed may reflect how much their views were affected by hearing their peers' perspectives. Two of the three restorations they scored had reflected the greatest scoring uncertainty on the surveys, with the vote for not merit/merit separated by only one vote of the twenty-three total. After their conversation, the jurors' group agreed that one of these deserved merit and the other did not. The third restoration, one they had not seen before, was the one discussed earlier in this section, which they decided to place in image excellence.

Coupled with anecdotal records of how seldom restorations have been challenged in the last several years and the concern that the not merit/merit and merit/image excellence format may hinder jurors' ability to see when they should challenge, the participants' realization suggests that all would benefit from ongoing conversation and education in this area. On this point and without prompting, at the end of their focus group, both artists and jurors expressed a desire that this study help in that effort.

After discussing the sample restorations, the groups reviewed the explicit and implicit criteria that participants used to determine their scores, as well as the relative importance of each. They then attempted to align those criteria with the twelve elements. Both groups drew very different conclusions than what they had said on the survey

(notably, that all twelve elements were of equal importance and helpful in scoring), and their views were nearly identical to each other. Distilled from the thinking of both groups, Figure 6 provides a graphic representation of the twelve elements of a merit image applied to photographic restoration. The arrangement reflects both the relative importance and the interrelationship of key elements, supplemented by important considerations that help to define them.
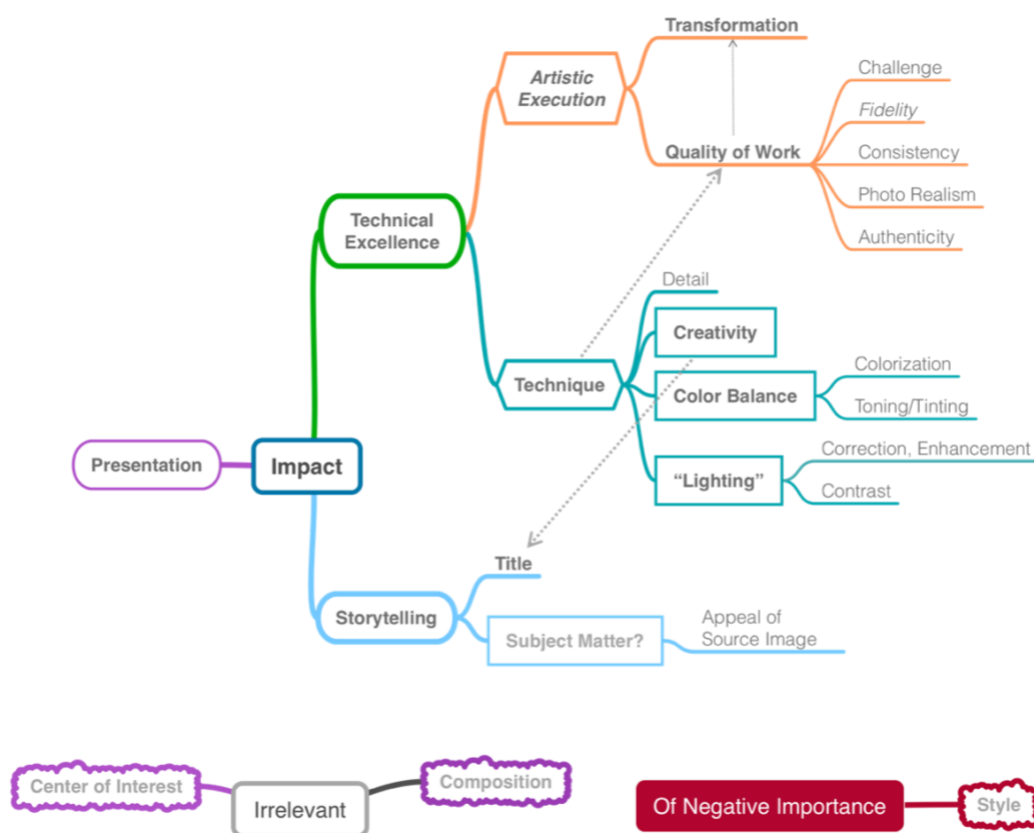

Fig. 6: The twelve elements of a merit image applied to photographic restoration

At the heart of evaluating restorations lies impact, earned and derived primarily from artistic execution and technique. Artistic execution represents the so-called

thirteenth element (often referred to as "difficulty and execution") jurors use to evaluate artist entries. Focus group participants felt that the quality of the work performed and the transformation accomplished both contribute to that assessment. Further, they gauged the quality of work by its fidelity to the original, historic authenticity, degree of photo realism, and consistency across the entire piece. While the quality of work also involves the challenge required to execute it, both groups agreed in the end that one must be somewhat open-minded about how difficulty is perceived, particularly in the case of originals that lack more obvious physical damage.

Under the element of technique, the artists found color balance and lighting[11] (like center of interest and composition) to be irrelevant, since all of these pertain to the original, with the caveat that color balance would apply to colorizations. On the other hand, the jurors felt that creativity, color balance, and lighting apply, even if only in minor ways. Creativity may reflect the methods the artist used to accomplish the work but also may be difficult to identify; color balance may apply to both colorization and toning or tinting; and lighting applies only so far as the artist modifies faulty or degraded lighting or improves the contrast from the original. Technically, though, this would not be "lighting" in the original sense of the term, but more accurately, just restoration technique.

Also promoting impact is the element of storytelling. In restorations, artists may use titles to set the stage for viewing the entry in a wider context or story. In that sense,

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[11] The juror group pointed out that the survey had omitted the element of lighting, but they discussed it along with the others in this conversation.

creativity connects to storytelling. If we are to regard the appeal of the original to be a valid criterion, then that also contributes to storytelling, if only implicitly.

Both groups felt that subject matter generally does not apply, except in the unverified suspicion that historical, classical portraits inspire higher scores than modern, snapshot-like ones as mentioned above. Support for this perspective emerged also in the comments of one juror who found document restoration to be less interesting.

Finally, on the element of style, both groups concluded that restoration artists exhibiting an identifiable style would actually undermine the fidelity of the restoration and decrease its impact.

In conclusion, the focus group discussions made significant refinements to all participants' views on the relative importance of the twelve elements of a merit image, and what emerged represents a more structured and comprehensive profile of how they organically evaluate restorations.

Implications and Recommendations

PPA's commitment to high-quality education and member growth exemplifies the best photographic organization in the industry. They routinely review and modify their programs to better serve their members, and they will continue to do so with competition. Indeed, conversations with members and leaders of the JEC and IPCC have suggested an openness to recommendations learned from the artists and jurors in this study. These recommendations take the form of "how might we statements" (Anderson) to convey a tone that is humble, collaborative, respectful of others' perspectives, and speculative rather than authoritative. This stance empowers those responsible for decision making and problem solving without usurping their authority.

The first area pertains to practices already in place to help jurors prior to the start of each competition, namely, the Jury Charge. How might we modify the Jury Charge to help jurors with their task? Might we add language to the Jury Charge similar to the particular cautions about judging wedding and general artist categories? That is, what might jurors keep in mind when judging restorations? This especially applies to jury panels in which not every member holds the artist specialty qualification. The charge might include wording such as, "When evaluating photographic restorations, keep in mind that they are technical rather than creative in nature and, when done well, it may be difficult to recognize how much work was done."

We might also add sample photographic restorations at the merit and image excellence levels to give jurors some visual reference for what quality at those levels looks like, in the same way as samples represent other categories. On this point, the Jury Charge

warns, "CAUTION: When judging for the General Collection, use General Collection criteria. Do not use the [Image Excellence Collection] as your standard or you will surely overlook images deserving of a merit" (Jury Charge 0:06:25). By adding sample restorations to differentiate the two standards, might we help jurors avoid imposing too high a standard for merit on restoration entries?

The Jury Charge video also reminds jurors, "You must maintain an intense desire to be fair to the maker. Your heartfelt, consistent evaluations are critical to the fairness of the judging and its educational value" (Jury Charge 01:19). It also reminds them, "Whenever there is a distinct discrepancy between your evaluation and that of the jury, you are duty bound to challenge that entry" (Jury Charge 02:57). Elsewhere, jury chairs are given "…the obligation to express their views when they feel an entry is being misjudged…" (IPC 10). With the change from a numeric to a binary, not merit/merit and merit/image excellence scoring system, even jurors express hesitation over the increased pace of judging and the difficulty of knowing when they might be out of line with their peers.

This suggests that PPA could consider designing a way to obtain anonymous feedback from approved jurors on any significant change, asking such questions as, "How might we reevaluate the new scoring system and how challenges are triggered?" and, "How are jurors to know when there is a discrepancy between their thinking and that of their peers in a binary voting system?" Further, might jury chairs be encouraged to take a more active role in triggering challenges, particularly when a one-vote margin determines the outcome? Might similar research be helpful in other categories, especially new ones

(e.g., reportage) or ones where a large number of jurors' experience is limited (e.g., commercial)?

Finally, growing out of this study, might we provide continuing education to approved jurors on how to evaluate photographic restoration? Those who participated in both the survey and focus groups expressed a strong need and desire for this. Professional development could address how both artists and jurors in the study approached evaluation, beginning by looking at the finished restoration to determine its overall impact and proceeding to a more careful examination of the original. Ideally, jurors would be asked to score sample restorations that fall near the merit/not merit and merit/image excellence line, followed by metacognitive conversations emulating the approach used in the study. Training could then address how the twelve elements apply uniquely to photographic restorations, using the diagram in Figure 6 and accompanying explanations, and concluding with a discussion of some of the particular difficulties involved in judging restorations and assumptions to avoid when scoring (such as determining merit eligibility based on the lack of obvious damage in the original; applying image excellence standards to merit judging; or making assumptions about what artists may or may not have done in restoring the original).

Knowing that PPA was providing training for jurors on this, restoration artists would also come to competitions with a stronger trust for the process, knowing challenges are but one source of juror learning.

In summary, through qualitative research, involving both restoration artists and approved PPA jurors, this study began by surveying perspectives on the evaluation of photographic restoration, particularly with reference to the twelve elements of a merit

image. Based on the survey responses, the study then held focus groups to explore and refine how the twelve elements apply to judging photographic restorations. Focus groups also explored how PPA might support both jurors and restoration artists through other aspects of competition, as well as continuing education. In reviewing the study's recommendations, considering appropriate actions, and communicating those efforts to its members, PPA will continue their tradition of excellence in supporting photographers' and artists' growth.

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