

Keith: John, you know about photographic salons and such things - can I ask you a question?

John: Sure Keith- what's your question?

K Recently I have seen in salon rules something about images and entries being 'suitable'. I mean, what's that all about? Surely the selectors choose the images for the exhibition and disqualify those images which are against the rules and that's it all done?

J That is one way of looking at it but you may find such a view does not paint an entirely accurate or appropriate picture.

K Explain.

J Let me ask you a question in turn. Have you ever gone to the showing of a digital international exhibition?

K Yes - it was a great evening but what a lot of pictures.

J When you looked at the pictures did you want to see each one for 2 seconds, 5 seconds, 10 seconds or perhaps even longer?

K About 10 seconds.

J Let's think for a moment about a big salon with perhaps 13,000 or more entries. They accept around 30% of the entries meaning the exhibition would contain around 4,000 images. At 10 seconds each your 'evening' viewing the exhibition would last over 10 hours with no breaks for tea or coffee. Would that be good?

K No way - I thought an hour and half was long enough with a few hundred images. But hold on, what happens to the other 3,000 or so images? If they are not in the exhibition do they lose their 'acceptance'?

J Good question - no - they keep their 'acceptance'.

K So what does 'acceptance' mean if the images are 'accepted' for the exhibition but are not 'in' the exhibition? That does not make any sense.

J Remember that word 'suitable' you asked me about at the beginning? This where it comes in. The images are looked at by the selectors and either accepted as being 'suitable for inclusion' in the exhibition or rejected as 'unsuitable'.

K So who decides what's in the exhibition?

J It is a two part process. The selectors determine which images are 'suitable' for inclusion but the final exhibition makeup is done by the organizers from the set of 'suitable' images.

K Is that why in the show we seldom see many images of the same scene?

J Yes - the organizers may decide not to include in the salon show all two dozen images of kingfishers sitting on a branch even though all two dozen images were selected as being 'suitable'.

K To keep with that idea, would all two dozen images gain 'acceptances' for PSA or FIAP distinctions?

J Yes - the entrants are being recognized by PSA and FIAP for having submitted images judged as being 'suitable' for inclusion in the exhibition - not for having images in the final show but for submitting images which are 'suitable'.

K Do all selectors understand this and work this way?

J Unfortunately no. Some selectors feel that they are there to produce the final exhibition and adjust their marks and scores accordingly.

K I don't like the sound of that. What do you mean adjust their scores? Again - please explain.

- J I'll ask you. Let's assume you have a wonderful picture of a cougar leaping from a tree. If it comes up for scoring early on, the selectors say 'Yeh' and give it a top mark - they think it is suitable for inclusion in the exhibition. But what if it comes near the end of the day and there have been six other images of cougars leaping from trees? Some selectors have openly said during the marking session something along the line "We already have some of this type of image so we don't need another so we should score this one low". I'll ask you - is that fair to the entrant?
- K No - that's very unfair - but - surely that doesn't actually happen - does it?
- J Unfortunately - yes. But not if the selectors recognize that their role is to assess images as being 'suitable' for inclusion rather than thinking they are creating the final exhibition and need to balance the pictures.
- K Hold on - since they are not in fact selecting images and balancing the makeup of the exhibition but merely judging if a picture is suitable for inclusion, should we not call them 'judges' rather than 'selectors'?
- J A very good point. Calling them 'judges' might make it clearer that they are there to assess the images and need to be consistent and give quality images good marks even if it is the umpteenth similar image.
- K Ok let's now call them 'judges' since they are supposed to judge each image as being 'suitable' or 'unsuitable'. But what are they supposed to do with images which violate the rules? We have 'suitable' and 'unsuitable' - surely we need another group for 'disqualified' images?
- J Interesting point you have raised but have you not already answered that yourself? What did we say these judges were supposed to do?
- K Judge or assess if an image is 'suitable' or 'unsuitable' for inclusion in the exhibition.
- J If the image is badly processed and therefore 'unsuitable', do the judges need to give a reason or just a low score?
- K A low score.
- J If the image is badly composed or exposed, do they need to give a reason or just a low score.
- K A low score.
- J Ok, so if the image is 'unsuitable' because in the judges' opinion it violates the rules, do they need to give a reason or just a low score.
- K I suppose just a low score - but surely it needs to be 'disqualified'.
- J I would ask in turn 'why'? Have these people been appointed as secret policemen charged with enforcing the rules and inflicting penalties upon the violators or are they there to determine which images are suitable for inclusion? What is their purpose?
- K To judge the images. But surely we still need to disqualify the image?
- J Stop for a moment. If you ordered 5 large rose bushes from a garden center, paid for them and then when they came there were only 4, what would you do?
- K Ask them to send the missing one.
- J And if they refused?
- K Take them to court.
- J Why? On what basis?
- K Because they would be in breach of the contract.

J Ok. So the garden center sent 5 bushes but they were all small bushes instead of the large ones you ordered and paid for. What would you do?

K Complain and ask them to send large ones.

J And if they refused?

K Again, take them to court - they would still be in breach of contract.

J Not quite so easy this time though. Four instead of five is easy to argue, but small versus large as you ordered - that is a judgement call and more complicated. Could you just state in court that the bushes were small without providing the court with evidence to support your claim?

K No of course not. I would have to supply evidence of large and small and then let them argue against my case.

J Could you ask the garden center to supply the evidence you need to show that their bushes were small?

K No - of course not. They would only need to argue against the evidence I presented. If I had no evidence, then the case would go against me. But how does this relate to disqualifying an image?

J Just one sec. If they sent small bushes, are you entitled to state that they are in breach of contract or merely *claim* that they appear to be in breach and let a court decide if your claim is valid? Is that not what we have commercial courts for - breaches of contract?

K I suppose so. Yes - it would be up to the court to declare that they were in breach. But where is all this going with respect to disqualifying an image?

J When you enter a salon, are there rules about the images and what you can and cannot submit?

K Yes.

J Do you have to agree to abide by the rules?

K Yes.

J And do you pay an entry fee?

K Yes - where are you going with this?

J Have you, in fact, created a contract between you and the salon?

K I suppose so.

J Good. If one of your images 'violates' the rules it means you did not abide by the terms of the agreement. Right?

K Yes.

J Would you be technically in 'breach of contract'?

K I suppose so - I think I see where you are going with this.

J Since violating the rules is a judgement call, could the salon organizer just brand you as being 'in breach of contract' or, like the large rose bush problem, would he need to go to court to have the issue decided as a 'breach of contract'.

K Ok - yes a court.

J But if I declare and identify one of your image as 'disqualified' am I not declaring that you are in breach of contract? Without a court order?

K I suppose so.

J And what if, as organizer, I got it wrong and the 'disqualified' image was in fact valid. Am I as organizer, risking being sued for libel?

K Ouch. So what can we do?

J Just assign a low score.

K But the entrant then gets away with it. Surely not.

- J No he doesn't. We ask the entrant to justify how the image met the rules.
- K And if he refuses?
- J Remember that word you asked me about at the beginning - 'suitable'. Well if the entrant refuses to justify how his image meets the rules, then we determine that the entrant is a person 'unsuitable to be represented in the exhibition' and remove his entry.
- K What about his entry fee?
- J We refund it, thereby nullifying the contract. And if he has any awards or acceptances, these are also nullified automatically because his entry is nullified.
- K That's not really a penalty though. What if he then enters another salon?
- J Well there is another action that the organizers do when they find someone has been violating the rules and cheating.
- K There's more?
- J The circumstances and the suspect images are reported back to FIAP and the PSA. If their investigation shows that the person knowingly and intentionally violated the rules, they can be banned for a period or even banned for life from entering any other FIAP or PSA salon.
- K Now that's a penalty! Banned for life for cheating in a salon? But how does that work?
- J The salon organizers receive lists from FIAP and PSA and 'decline' to accept entries from people on the list as being people 'unsuitable to be represented in the exhibition'.
- K Can they do that?
- J Yep. The salon is not obliged to accept an entry. For example, if you were running a salon with the theme 'Children', would you accept an entry from a convicted paedophile or would you decline on the basis that the person is 'unsuitable'?
- K Of course I would decline his entry. And I thought my original question about the word 'suitable' was simple.
- J Not at all - 'suitable' is central to the whole process. So what have you learned?
- K That judges are there to determine what images are 'suitable for inclusion' - they are not there to create or balance the content of the exhibition.
- J Yep. And?
- K The judges should assess each image on its own merit and not mark it down just because there has already been a similar image.
- J Yep. And?
- K Instead of disqualifying an image and labelling someone as a cheat, you just assign a low score and investigate.
- J And if they have been cheating or do not co-operate?
- K You report the circumstances to FIAP and the PSA and the entrant may be banned as a person 'unsuitable to be represented in the exhibition' .
- J Yep - simple, clean and effective.
- K So what wording do you suggest?
- J [The organizers and judges reserve the right, before, during or after the judging to determine without providing a reason that an image is unsuitable to be included in the exhibition. They also reserve the right to determine that the entrant is not in their opinion a suitable person to be represented in the exhibition, whereupon the application to be included in the exhibition will be declined and any payment made will be refunded.](#)