

Critique:

What to say and how to say it

8/1/2007

New Westminster Photography Club

Shona Lafortune

Critique:

It's not easy giving constructive comments on the work of another photographer, but we all benefit from the input of other members.

Remember, respect the photographer. Think of the kinds of comments you would like to receive: positive, helpful....

Although your reaction to the photograph is important – after all, the photographer is talking to you, your reaction should be secondary to the image. It's not about you; it's about the photograph you are viewing.

The first step is to identify the main strength of the image. That might be the emotional impact, the perfect capture of a moment, a particular message, or a clear botanical illustration. The words "like" and "nice" are not as helpful to the photographer as "the grain and sepia tone emphasize a feeling of age in this photo" or "the expression on the child's face captures perfectly the delight of a summer ice-cream cone".

If the message is not clear, try to understand what the photographer was trying to communicate and, if you can, suggest how the message could be stronger.

Don't make assumptions about technique. If you don't know for sure (and some techniques look a lot alike), you can comment on its appropriateness to the image (ie "does it work?") You might also ask the photographer so that everyone can benefit.

Address technical issues in a helpful way. Don't just say "it's over-exposed", say, for example, "A half stop less exposure might have brought out more detail in the whites and increased the saturation of the colours". Instead of saying "the background is too in focus, try "use of a large aperture might have isolated the subject more effectively against the background."

No one is waiting for you to speak, so in written comments, you can take your time!

Thank you for helping us all improve our photography.