

WHAT IS A COHESIVE OVERVIEW IMAGE?

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The Portfolio Distinction was launched in January 2016. This was exciting because PSA was, for the first time, offering members the chance to gain recognition for a themed body of work that had been conceived, photographed, edited and finally collated in an Overview Image over a period of months and in some cases years, so that the submission truly represents the photographer's skills and visual awareness.

The Portfolio Overview image is the first image that the five assessors see when the Statement of Intent is read. Their reaction to both is hugely important. If three or more assessors approve both and each subsequent individual image is also approved, the Portfolio is successful. If three or more assessors find fault with the Overview Image, the Portfolio immediately fails. It is a requirement that the Statement of Intent must clearly describe the photographer's intent and accompanying images must be supportive.

Guidance issued about the Portfolio Distinction on the PSA website states that '*a Portfolio should be cohesive, consistent, balanced, and have symmetry*'. It has become clear that individual applicants sometimes struggle with each of these requirements but one of the more common problem is how to achieve cohesion.

What follows is my interpretation of the rules and suggestions for how they might be clarified.

What is meant by Consistency, Balance and Symmetry in the Overview Image?

Dictionary definitions of these words are conflicting and unhelpful to photographers. This is my interpretation of what they mean:

- *Consistency* implies a uniform standard of visual awareness, composition, camera skills, post-processing skills and presentation of individual images. The most common reasons for failure are technical and include failure to control highlight and shadow detail as well as artefacts such as sensor dust. Another common problem is the failure to look around the image and deal with distractions within the image such as intruding branches that distract.
- *Balance* refers to the structured organisation of individual images within the Overview Image with respect to the flow of colours and tonality.
- *Symmetry* describes how the primary shapes within an image, direction of movement and sight lines are matched with similar mirrored features in other images.
- *COHESION* comes from the summation of the effects of all of the above.