

Exhibition Co-ordinator's Report 2010/11

The 2011 Exhibition pretty much followed the format I introduced last year.

Adopting "February" as the standard submission month for the Exhibition resulted in 130 photographers entering just over 1,000 images. This is about a 30% increase on last year - not yet matching the heights of some previous years, but very much meeting the "quality over quantity" principle that I feel is so vital in an annual exhibition such as ours. This was remarked upon by so many visitors, both verbally and in written comments - these being the best images ever!

In addition to the undeniably exquisite photography(!), the improved presentation of the prints has been a contributory factor to this year's success.

The framing of all the prints is the culmination of Joe Kaplonek's vision when he was co-ordinator, and very much supported by me. The framing of the images is the comment that I have heard most and in all cases it was to express how professional our exhibition now looks. There is no doubt in my mind that this has produced a very slick and professional looking exhibition. Even those from outside camera club circles have commented on this.

This year we introduced the individual labelling of each print with the title of the image, the photographer's name, and the class into which it was entered. Again, this added to the professional look, but most importantly provided the viewer with instant information about the image, which was previously lacking. I knew this would result in a reduction in sales of the Catalogue, which it did slightly, but the ease with which people could readily identify images and photographers, I feel, outweighed this.

On the subject of the Catalogue, this year we decided to alter the layout such that all *Winning* and *Certificate of Merit* images were reproduced alongside the entry listing for their Class. Feedback suggests that this was well received. It is a great honour to receive an award in the Exhibition, and only fitting that any such image should then be included in the catalogue. Sadly the catalogue is an area which is not self-funding, even before the introduction of the print labels, and is an immense burden to produce. We spend nearly £400 in printing costs, send one copy to every exhibitor free of charge, and then sell a further 60-70 copies for £1 each – clearly not covering our costs. However, I have deemed this a necessary expense as the catalogue carries a lot of kudos amongst those who have work exhibited and would be sorely missed. I think it is a cost we shall have to continue to bear. I would like to mention at this point the great contribution that Rosie Aldridge makes in the production of the Catalogue for printing and I would like us all to thank her.

The other new introduction this year was the official selling of exhibits. You may not be aware that the City Council does not charge us for the use of the City Space gallery. This is because, in line with other galleries, they prefer to charge a commission on sales and derive their income this way, but have been very relaxed about imposing this upon us in the past. It had been their intention to charge their standard 30% this year, but with the introduction of a new computer system they felt they couldn't cope, so we didn't have to pay anything! We ended up charging 10% which has come into the Society as income. Sadly, the sales weren't great - £300 worth, bringing in just £30, but it is something I intend to continue with next year. Some suggested that we would have sold more images if the prices were indicated against each print. It had been a conscious decision on my part not to display the prices as I didn't want anyone to feel awkward or competitive as pricing

was left up to the individual photographer, but perhaps it is something to consider for next year.

Visitor numbers this year were excellent: 2,022. Out of our three week period (23 days) we lost five days when we were forced to shut for the Easter, May Day and Royal Wedding bank holidays when all Libraries are statutorily closed. However during the school holiday period we do benefit from additional passing trade. Then in the final week we had the disruption of the closure of the Discovery Centre's library space. So I think our 2,022 visitors is a very impressive number, only just a little short of last year.

The closure of the DC caused a lot of disruption. We, and the City Space staff, had been assured that the side door would be permanently open, clearly signed and manned by a library attendant. As it turned out, the door was permanently locked with poor signage and a barricade obstructing entry to the café where some rather grumpy library staff had to phone through to the gallery to request our assistant to come down and accompany visitors in. We have received a written apology from the DC about this, accepting full responsibility and acknowledging the great contribution WPS makes to the whole centre, but it came all too late for us!

All the same, the visitors we had were very enthusiastic about voting for their favourite images, though not for projected images – only three votes out of the total of 650 cast! The winning image is currently on display.

The issue of exhibiting projected images was interesting. A number of visitors who were not familiar with photographic society exhibitions thought that the images on the screen were ones which hadn't made the grade to be exhibited properly! Others couldn't be bothered to sit through the rotation of images. It does make me question the value of exhibiting these, but I have no intention of withdrawing them, next year at least.

In fact next year there will be another "open" projected image class which is at the request of the City Council to coincide with, and celebrate, our Olympic year. This collaboration between WPS and WCC will hopefully result in a higher profile for the Society as the Council will be promoting the Olympic themed "competition" and local residents will be encouraged to enter (as well as the rest of us) and we will be displaying the winners.

The Eye Catcher Young Photographer Competition again ran, and continues to run, in conjunction with the exhibition, with entries closing on 30th June. If any of your children/grandchildren showed interest please remind them of this date. The winning images will be displayed in the DC for the last three weeks of the school summer holiday.

Next year, other than the new Olympic category, I intend there to be very little change – hopefully everything will be running slickly smoothly . . . in readiness for, perhaps, a new Exhibition Co-ordinator to take on the role the following year?

Louise Brown
Exhibition Co-Ordinator
May 2011