

The judging process: Nothing to be afraid of

What are quilt Judges looking for? The answer is simple – the best entry on the day, in a given category and in accordance with the criteria for that category.

It should be remembered that **best** in one show, **may not be the best in another show**. It depends on the other entries and the categories.

What makes the best entry? A combination of overall appearance and impact, and technical competence. This does not necessarily mean a perfect entry.

You buy a bag of apples – they are all good apples, but they are not all perfect. How do you pick out the best apple in the bag? You look for the one with the best appearance and the smallest number of blemishes.

And so with quilts. Judging is not about simply criticising entries. It is looking for the entry which looks good, meets the category criteria and displays technical skill **more than any other**. The range of entries to choose from will reflect the variety of quilt makers and their love for the craft, their likes and dislikes, the purpose behind their work and their differing skill levels in what is a craft for everyone. In a top-class field it may fall to “nit-picking” to select a winner.

How do we assess appearance?

- Is it visually appealing?
- Do the details of design and technique contribute to an overall unity?
- Does the use of colour and choice of fabric enhance the design?
- Does the colour of the quilting thread and the quilting enhance the quilt?
- Is it neat and clean, without dog hairs or loose threads etc?
- Does it lie flat?
- Is it square, with external edges the same length as through the centre?
- Is there a complexity or innovation not normally attributed to the pattern?

Where can we find quilting blemishes?

Piecing

- Is there evidence of darker fabric from seams coming through to the top?
- Is the grain line consistent throughout the pieces?
- Are the points of triangles and diamonds etc all visible and not chopped off?
- Are the seams matched up?
- Is the stitching firm and neat?
- Is the stitching straight where it should be?

Applique

- Are the stitches neat and even
- Do the pieces lie flat, without puckers?
- Are the curves smooth and on bias?
- Are points sharp and firmly stitched?
- Does the thread match?

Quilting

- Is the amount of quilting evenly spread (not having too much in some areas and none in others)?
- Is the pattern complimentary to the overall design?
- Are the stitches even in length, and an appropriate length for the style of quilting?
- For hand work is the stitch coming through evenly on the back?
- For machines, is the tension right, particularly if the threads are different colours?
- Is it free of pleats or gathers?
- Are lines straight, particularly parallel ones?
- Are there no starting and finishing knots evident?

Finishing

- Are borders appropriate in width and straight?
- Is binding even, full and neatly stitched?
- Are corners square and neat whether mitred or abutted?
- Is the backing coordinated to the piece and not shadowing onto the front?
- If a hanging sleeve is included is it appropriate in size, neatly applied, and coordinated to the backing?
- Is there an appropriate and informative label?
- Are there marking lines still visible?

Embellishment

- Is it appropriate and/or complimentary to the piece?
- Is it well executed and secure?