# Guide to discussing your work and the work of others

Subject Matter: Why did the artist pick this particular subject? Does it have a special meaning of feeling to you as a viewer? Does it seem autobiographical? Do you see possibilities for interpreting is as a visual metaphor? Think of what a metaphor is in a poem. Is it a special kind of comparative symbol? Do you, as an artist/ person, feel a philosophical of psychological need to use this subject matter? Is there particular visual appeal? Remember that subject matter and object matter is not necessarily the same.

Form and Technique: The element of treatment, transformation, and risk. Is the subject matter treated appropriately in regard to scale, framing and printing? Is it quite, contemplative, energetic, expressive, haunting, powerful, bold, cute, ugly, lyrical, mystical, humorous, loving, critical, etc.? Do you want to touch it, smell it, taste it? How does it make you feel? Is the technical treatment experimental and original? How? Have any risks been taken? Does the artist’s technique (everything she/ he does to the image itself) fit or support the image or is it distracting, gimmicky, poorly done?

Content: What has the artist done to make the image express or communicate something? Does the message seem worthwhile? Is it universal or personal or both? Does the technique support the idea behind the image? Is the message clear and concise, is it meant to be ambiguous and open to more than one interpretation? After all, is it “well said”?

Critical Question: Did the artist realize his/ her intention? Is the work original or derivative? Is it exciting, insightful, boring, and/ or poetic? Are you able to experience the work fully or is there something preventing this? What? What could the artist have done to make it clearer, more interesting, more exciting, and more original? How would you have done it differently, or would you have done the same thing?

All criticism is an exchange of ideas. It should be delivered with the best interest in mind. We tend to over-connect the artist and his/ her work. Do not criticize the person, but rather the work. If it is your work, keep in mind that the critics are most likely trying to help you improve your work. Always consider the source when you are processing criticism of your work.