

# “Mock Judging” & “What Judges are Looking For” Sessions

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As 2013 comes to a close and the gourd shows for the year are put to bed there are still potential judging activities to consider doing. Judges can get together and hold a Mock Judging event or a Judge can hold a “What Judges are Looking For” session for Patch or Chapter members in anticipation of the 2014 shows. Each of these events will give participating Judges a continuing education credit.

The objectives of each event are the same, while the audiences are different. A mock judging event can give a judge an opportunity to practice his/her observation skills on categories that they don't have

personal expertise as an artist. Do you know what categories are your areas of strengths and weaknesses? Look for other judges in your area who have similar strengths and weaknesses then plan the Mock Judging event. The judges who will participate in the mock judging event can each bring a few gourds for the selected categories for this practice session, and a print out of the Judging by Category guide. Participants should be reminded to not take the critiques of their artwork personally.

Many competitors leave a gourd show with questions about what the judges thought of their entry. Using the 2013 AGS Judging Guidelines by Categories guidebook a judge can help gourd artists understand “what judges look for” when judging a gourd at a show. When scheduling a class like this it would be helpful if the participants had read the guidebook beforehand. Direct participants to the AGS website and the Judging Information link on the home page, or provide them this url: <http://www.americangourdsociety.org/judging.html> The guidebook is listed as a resource for training new judges. Additionally, a critique of a few gourds by the participants after reviewing the guidebook can be helpful in solidifying for them the key points judges will be observing. I recommend the judge bring gourds that have examples of excellence and areas for improvement, rather than having the participants bring their own work.

In summary, the points below are the core/universal judging considerations, that when combined with the technique-specific observations should help artists

recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the art brought for a mock judging activity

## The Gourd

- Appropriateness for the project (thickness matters for some techniques)
- Are the stem, body and blossom ends clean?
- Inside clean and finished?
- Does it sit steady?

## Neatness

- Holes (clay, pyrography, etc) neat & sharp or does it have ragged edges
- Stitching is uniform (versus overlapping or has uneven gaps)
- Finish is neat and has a smooth finish

## Presentation & Design

- Proportional; is perspective correct?
- Complexity
- Created with technical soundness?
- Does the technique (per category) predominate?

## Details Matter

- Color done well (even or patchy?)
- Does glue/adhesive show in the finished piece?
- Finish compliments the design (no runs or fingerprints?)

## Skill & Artistry

- Degree of difficulty
- Originality

## Recently Trained AGS Apprentice Judges

Join me in recognizing the newly trained AGS Apprentice Judges, many of who have judging experience and are only a few steps away from being a fully certified judge. Terry Noxel and Merrill McHenry each held training sessions that were both fun and informative. The dialogue and practice were amazing and we thank all of these judges for making these training sessions so valuable. We also thank our AGS Certified Judge assistants Gloria Gay (PA) and Bill and Donna Decker (MO) for their contributions and support during the training events.

