

WGI 2025 Craftsmanship

Craftsmanship

Goal: Clarify and emphasize craftsmanship as an aspect of recognition and scoring.

Thanks to George Oliviero for preparing the following overview; with further thanks to James McCullough and Wes Vander Lugt, whose original work on [Transpositions](#) provided many words and the framework for our discussion of craft and craftsmanship for our deeper understanding of art.

Craftsmanship: the quality of skill, care, and mastery that is evident in the final work.

A large part of engaging with art is learning to understand the way an artwork is communicating, whether through rhythm and rhyme, melody and timbre, movement and gesture, line and color, or shape and form, or combination thereof. Craftsmanship involves the usage of various ways of communicating with the observer.

Art is not simply anything we choose to call art, but something that is constituted, developed, and communicated by crafting/craftsmanship.

Focusing on craftsmanship provides a means to engage with art on the level of skill and style. We do not intend to put aside the emotional, visceral, or subjective responses to art. Rather, the recognition of crafting and craftsmanship provides a deeper understanding of the work itself.

Putting some emphasis on the recognition of craft and craftsmanship enables us to distinguish between the “decorative and functional” and the “expressive and communicative” layers of art.

Any work of art may attract through decorative gestures (and we mean this comment as a positive rather than a negative). Nonetheless, this layer of the decorative does not necessarily indicate the presence of the level of communication, returning us to the meaning of craftsmanship.

To recognize the layers within the work of art gives the viewer a wider scope with regard not only to understanding but also to comparison.

Craftsmanship is a disciplined, acquired skill that requires practice and is generally subject to the appraisal of those who know the craft: the “guild” or our winter guard design community. Craft involves the effective usage and manipulation of these styles of communication: rhythm, rhyme, melody, timbre, movement, gesture, line, color, shape, form, imagery, visual narrative, texture, weight, dimension, perspective, and more. Great artists are great communicators in the language of their craft.

WGI 2025 Craftsmanship

The absence of craftsmanship is easy to detect. Its presence becomes similar to other ways that we determine how much, how often, across how many performers, in how many settings, and over time. Craftsmanship should be considered across all choices as relating to concept, color, unity, details, nuance, role, style, production values, technique, and overall transformation of the stage (and the varied use of space) to deliver on the artistic choice.

The presence of craftsmanship moves through gradations of the class expectations and evolves in terms of existing sometimes, often, or always as seen on the scoring ranges. Judges are expected to comment on how much, how often, and when crafting occurs or is less clear or less successful.

Craftsmanship is going to be on all score sheets in all captions in some form. It is demonstrated in the effective connection of effects and the crafting of design elements. It is meant to emphasize rewarding details, concept, unity, and an overall plan that can be seen as consciously designed/crafted. It will be seen through the lens of every caption by applying our recognition skills to the achievement and challenges experienced by the performers.

Craftsmanship will be seen in vocabulary as details and connections between skills and phrases that speak to more range, concentration, context, and responsibilities as well as demonstrated understanding of these elements. For EQ and MV, this will be noted as part of both vocabulary and overall achievement. We can notice the abilities of the performers to know what is going on around them and as they connect phrases or have more responsibilities than just single equipment or movement events. Judges should look for that ongoing level of "extra" detail and understanding demonstrated by the performers. For DA and GE, this will be noted as part of both composition and repertoire along with overall excellence and performance effect. We can notice not only the ability of the performers to demonstrate their spatial awareness in challenging settings and ability to communicate but also the designers' understanding of flow, layering, meter, invention, etc. Judges should look for that "extra" detail and understanding explored by the designers and thus required of the performers.

Evaluating craftsmanship applies both to the designer and the performer. There is a connection between the crafted design and the performers who demonstrate a high level of skill and dexterity leading to a deeper understanding of the art. Performers deliver craftsmanship when they embody authentic communication and emotion, dedication to meticulous skill, and attention to detail. They are craftspeople demonstrating mastery and understanding across time throughout the content, challenges, and context.

WGI 2025 Craftsmanship

Verbiage in the manual:

It will be key to understand that the craft of choreography is not simply vocabulary-building, but to respond to premise and setting, and to generate interest and impact! Looking at the total through a choreographic lens will help us appreciate the differences between the planned and the random, and to see that they are not equal efforts or achievements.

For now, we are asking that any points that already acknowledge choreographic efforts be given special emphasis as we continue to heighten our awareness. We ask Judges to look particular at efforts including (but not limited to) phrasing, crafting, interrelationship etc. This is a continuation of our efforts over the last few seasons.

When the choreographic effort is high in the hierarchy of the vertical moment, we are obliged to dig deeper into the phrase to look beyond the simple visual presence of the choreographic choice (plane, speed, visual weight, direction, etc.) into the actual skills and how those skills are connected and crafted into the equipment, movement phrase. This speaks beyond the reductions of “toss, feature, phrase, quality” into the specifics of the choreographic choice and how those choices relate to the total design.

Craftsmanship in Design as well as choreographic craftsmanship should be acknowledged and rewarded.

Choreographic craftsmanship can result in both visual dynamics as well as expressive dynamics [note: we have clarified and use dynamic efforts in the analysis captions to clearly distinguish from expression as a communication and emotive element in effect]. They might also be a part of recurring motifs that lend depth and interest to the design.

Examples of ways craftsmanship might be acknowledged by various captions:

- An equipment judge may recognize the intricate hand positioning and planar changes necessary throughout the duration of the flag phrase to transition from a radial to a front-facing ensemble orientation.
- A movement judge may recognize the timing of spatial responsibilities for the bodies of the dancers to move into the ground and between the legs of the rifles as the rifles are moving through space and reshaping their legs in tandem with their equipment responsibilities.
- An equipment judge may recognize the challenging roll in and out of the ground before a toss as it creates additional depth to the blend and also allows for less set up time.

WGI 2025 Craftsmanship

- A movement judge may recognize the detailing and choreography demonstrated going in and out of picking up equipment and the blend required to make that one seamless phrase.
- A design judge may recognize the use of levels and speed in the sabres as they develop around a pod of flags to draw emphasis with an exactness to timing and density.
- An effect judge may recognize the ability of the intentional placement and use of color and speed to maintain suspense and create a stronger sense of surprise and relief when the soloist appears from behind the set piece.
- A design judge may recognize the choice of keeping all performers on stage at all times and the choreographic detailing of ensuring unity and musicality in the composing process.
- An effect judge may note the emotional maturity and engagement required for the team to present all performers on all pieces of equipment along with significant movement phrases, and how this exposure over time creates risk and is also effective.