

Tips on Competing

SELECTING YOUR IMAGES

Emotional Impact: Think of the viewer. The more universal the theme, the more successful the image. Very personal images can have universal themes, such as childhood, beauty, fear, joy, serenity, etc. Look for this in your people images especially. Color itself can have emotional impact as do the tonal values in a black and white image.

Craftsmanship: In making the image as well as presenting the print, do not enlarge the image too much if it is not tack sharp! Color correction for color prints is extremely important. Judges can recognize a print that is too magenta, yellow or cyan. Detail in the highlights and shadows should be maintained in both black and white and color prints. Make sure the surface of your photograph and mount-board are free of dents, scratches, etc.

Entering your image: Choose the correct class or category. Entering in the wrong area will disqualify your photograph. Does your image meet the criteria of the category or theme?

Choosing your images: Choose an image that has 'punch', color, composition or an unusual view. Ask yourself, will this image catch the judge's eye? If you are not sure which specific images to enter, one of your best bets is to lay out a number of choices and see which ones have the greatest impact. It sometimes takes an acquaintance to help you with this because your memory or emotional investment may override your judgment. It is also a good idea to look at books and magazines to get a feel for what gives an image impact.

Three of the best books I have found that are the most helpful in understanding photography are: *Photography and the Art of Seeing* by Freeman Patterson and *The Art of Photographing Nature* by Art Wolfe and Martha Hill and *The Making of Landscape Photographs* by Charlie Waite. All of them contain excellent dialogues on what makes an expressive photograph. You can find them online quite easily.

PAPERWORK

READ THE RULES CAREFULLY for a competition. Too often you hurt yourself through entering work in the wrong class or category or by mounting your work incorrectly or simply missing the dates! You must strictly adhere to the entry and display requirements.

Titles: Think carefully about the title. Some competitions do not allow a title and some do. If you are relying on a title to explain your image, think again, the image should be able to stand on its own and it should not have to be explained by the title.

PRESENTATION

The presentation is as important as the image, even though it is the image that is being judged. The papers and inks will vary according to manufacturer of the printer you use to create your works of art. You can find information on the internet that will tell you which inks and papers will give you the optimum results for archival display. If in doubt, have it professionally printed. Be aware that extended display under fluorescent lighting can shift print colors.

Protect your prints! A 2 ply or 4 ply over-mat (window mat) will prevent one print from contact with another thus avoiding mars or scratches. High gloss prints are especially vulnerable. Tracing paper or archival tissue can be used to cover prints while being handled. If you use a protective cover, remove it before submitting.

Use good presentation materials! Most competitions require a museum quality mat in either white or black. Choose either color depending on how they enhance the image, your eye should go straight to the image not the mat. Be careful using a black mat, make sure the blacks in your image are as black as the mat! Mat size is also a consideration. The general rule in framing is that the mat should be 3 times the size of the molding or frame. A 2 ½ to 3 inch border is a good size. They should be large enough to compliment the image. **DO NOT USE** rubber cement or spray glue to affix your prints. Do not use clear tape. These materials wreak havoc. Prints often come right off the mount-board. Either dry mount or securely affix print with acid-free artist's tape underneath a window mat. Do not use corners as prints can pop out of them.

The main thing to remember about competing is to have fun! Don't get too upset if the judge doesn't like your photograph/s. What one person likes another doesn't...remember, as Bob Ross used to say; 'there are no mistakes in art, just happy accidents'!