



PPANI

Professional Photographers
Association of Northern Illinois

2024
PHOTOGRAPHIC
COMPETITION
GUIDEBOOK

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SECTION I – Rules

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION COMMITTEE

Enforcement of the rules, as set forth in this document, will be carried out by the Photographic Competition Committee (hereinafter referred to as the PCC).

1. The PCC shall consist of at least three (3) people, as determined by the PPANI Board, one of whom shall be the Chair of the PCC.
2. The PCC has the authority to decide any questions not specifically covered in this handbook.

ENTRY RULES

1. All images must have been created using photographic processes. Additional processes can be added to the photograph in applicable categories.
2. All photographic elements must have been created by the maker. No stock or AI images will be allowed.
3. All processing, manipulation, and rendering must be done by the entrant or under their direct supervision.
4. The entrant has obtained and has access to all necessary releases (model or property) and agrees to hold PPANI harmless against all claims and liabilities arising out of PPANI's display, publication, and promotion or other use of each image submitted to PPANI.
5. The entrant's name shall not appear anywhere in or on the entry.
6. No entry will be eligible if it has been made under the supervision of an instructor or as a class assignment. All images submitted must be self-directed. Images created in an educational environment under direct supervision from an instructor are ineligible.
7. Any entry that has been created from an existing photograph, portrait, graphic or any other artwork produced by another person is a violation of the competition rules.
8. The original exposure may have been made at any time during the maker's career.
9. The entry may not have been entered in any previous PPANI competition and received a score of 80 or above, unless the image has been substantially reworked, as determined by the PCC.

ELIGIBILITY / WHO MAY ENTER

Anyone may enter a PPANI Photographic Competition, but only PPANI Active Voting Members (AVM) are eligible to receive awards. Entries by non-members will receive a score but will neither receive awards nor be considered for any “best of category” runoff.

NUMBER OF COMPETITIONS

1. A minimum of Two (2) competitions will be held each calendar year, tentatively scheduled for March and August.
2. Competitions may occasionally be rescheduled to adjacent months to accommodate speaker schedules.
3. Specific competition dates will be published in the Events section of the PPANI website, and on PPANI social media.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION ENTRY FEES

1. The entry fee for competitions is the PPANI monthly meeting fee.
2. PPANI photographic competitions are virtually hosted by the website www.printcompetition.com and entry requires an active account with applicable fees.

ENTRIES FOR SCORE ONLY

1. Entries made by non-members shall be for score only.
2. Previously submitted images that have been reworked but are ineligible for re-entry (see Eligibility), may be submitted for SCORE ONLY. The maker must coordinate such cases with the PCC Chair to avoid confusion or disqualification. Any images submitted for SCORE ONLY will still count as entries and be subject to the entry limits.

SECTION II – Entering Competition

CATEGORIES

Entries submitted for competition may be entered in any of nine categories as listed below. Entries must be submitted as digital files in any competition. Digital files are referred to herein as Images and/or Photographs.

1. **ILLUSTRATIVE PORTRAIT** - Images that include extensive styling, creative photo techniques, specialized makeup, or props are allowed. Post-production techniques are encouraged and may be an essential part of the final story in the photograph. Composite and non-composite images and highly manipulated images (Photoshop or similar) are allowed in this category. (Photographs of brides or weddings should be entered in the Wedding category)
2. **NATURAL PORTRAIT** - Images that depict the natural beauty of a subject. Lighting and posing should portray and enhance the personality and character of the subject. Images that use extensive makeup or props to transform the natural appearance, must be entered in Illustrative Portrait or Illustration/Digital Art categories. Post-production techniques are not to be an essential part of the final photograph. (Photographs of brides or weddings should be entered in the Wedding category)
3. **WEDDING** - All photographs pertaining to brides, weddings or social events must be entered in this category. Images can portray a subject or subjects from all aspects of a wedding including traditional portraits, candid or detail work. Images and all elements of an image in the Wedding review must be created in connection with an actual wedding. The entrant or entrants must have captured all elements of the final submission from that wedding. Images in the Wedding review should reflect the personality or personalities of the subject(s) or the story of the wedding as well as the personality, artistic and technical skills of the image-maker. Images should include some kind of visual wedding reference(s). The originally captured image (in RAW or jpg) must be available if requested by PPANI.
4. **COMMERCIAL/STILL LIFE** - Advertising, fashion, beauty, still life, food, architecture, and corporate photography are all included in this category. Composite and non-composite images, and highly manipulated images (Photoshop or similar) are allowed.
5. **NATURE/LANDSCAPE** - This category is for photography that is devoted to displaying natural elements such as landscapes, cityscapes, plants, flowers, trees, and close-ups of natural scenes and textures. Aerial, macro, and astrophotography are included in this category. It is allowed to crop, rotate, select dodging and burn, reduce noise, sharpen, adjust color/black-and-white, apply grain, as well as basic retouching. Photo stitching, focus stacking, multi-exposure, etc., is allowed as long as it is shot at the same time and in the same place as a consecutive sequence, seconds or minutes

apart. It is NOT allowed to add, delete or move elements by cloning, healing, patching, content-aware fill, liquefy, or similar tools. The originally captured image (in RAW or jpg) must be available if requested by PPANI.

6. ANIMALS - This category includes portraits of pets and domestic animals as well as images of wildlife in a natural habitat. The primary subject must be an animal.
7. REPORTAGE/PHOTOJOURNALISM - Images that illustrate an actual public or non-public event, life, an area of human interest, telling news that have meaning in the context or record of events, high impact, and/or lasting emotional response. ONLY basic color and brightness adjustments, cropping, dodging, and burning in are allowed. Only single-capture images will be accepted. Composite and multiple-exposure images will not be accepted. The originally captured image (in RAW or jpg) must be available if requested by PPANI.
8. ARTIST - An illustrative or graphic depiction of any concept or subject. Composite and non-composite images and highly manipulated images (Photoshop or similar) are allowed in this category. The Artist category is judged using different criteria than the other categories. In all other categories, just the final image result is considered when applying a score. With Artist, the final result is a factor, but the execution of technique and degree of difficulty are also considered. Guide images are encouraged to help judges understand the process and techniques involved in creating the final image. Techniques may be digital or traditional photographic or a combination thereof.
9. ALBUMS – Any subject presented as a set of album pages. Albums will be judged for impact, creativity, style, photographic quality, story content, expressions of subjects, lighting, presentation and salability of the work.

PREPARING IMAGE FILES

Failure to comply with these rules may result in disqualification. The decision of PPANI is final.

1. All files must be sized so the longest dimension is 4000 pixels. Each file must contain an embedded color profile of either sRGB or Adobe RGB1998 and be saved as a JPG. Total file size should not exceed 3.5 MB but may in some cases.
2. All entries must be titled. Entries marked “untitled” or “no title” will be disqualified.
3. Digital file names shall be the entry title, with spaces replaced with underscores. Example: See_Spot_Run.jpg.
4. Studio identification or entrant’s name cannot appear on any file.

PREPARING ALBUM FILES

1. Albums pages will be combined into a .zip file prior to uploading the album entry to printcompetition.com.
2. One must include a gray spread with your album title on the page as your PAGE ONE.
3. Maximum Viewable Canvas Size: 2560x1600, in a horizontal page format.
4. A page may represent a single album page or a spread.
5. A page may contain as few or as many images as desired.
6. Entry may contain up to 36 canvases or spreads. Page 1 must be filled with gray with the album title on it.
7. Each page or spread must contain an embedded color profile of either sRGB or Adobe RGB1998.
8. Identify pages sequentially in the order to be viewed using the following 3-digit format. Example: (001.jpg, 002.jpg, 003.jpg, 004.jpg, etc.)
9. All pages of an album must be in one folder. Please zip the contents into one file and upload to printcompetition.com.
10. Entrant's name may not appear on the album.

HOW TO ENTER

1. Register at <https://printcompetition.com> using email address and password. A fee is required to maintain an active account on this website.
2. Eight (8) entries are permitted in each PPANI competition. An album will be considered as a single entry.
3. The same image may be entered more than once if the presentation is completely different. Examples include Color vs B&W, different croppings, different presentations/borders, or different approaches to retouching of an image.
4. Choose organization, i.e., PPANI.
5. Begin entering and uploading the images (up to eight). Be careful that the longest dimension, whether it be width or height, is 4000 pixels.
6. Check appropriate CATEGORY for the image to be judged.
7. Neither the maker's name nor their studio watermark may appear on the image nor on any location within an album.
8. No changes to your entry are permitted once the entry deadline has passed. No refunds will be issued after the entry fee is paid.

SECTION III – Tips and Advice

THE 12 ELEMENTS OF A MERIT IMAGE

The 12 elements are used as the “gold standard” to define a merit image. Judges are trained to be mindful of these elements when adjudicating images.

1. Impact is the sense one gets upon viewing an image for the first time. Compelling images evoke laughter, sadness, anger, pride, wonder or another intense emotion. There can be impact in any of these twelve elements.
2. Creativity is the original, fresh, and external expression of the imagination of the maker by using the medium to convey an idea, message or thought.
3. Technical excellence is the photographic quality of the image itself as it is presented for viewing. Retouching, manipulation, sharpness, exposure, presentation/border, and correct color are some items that speak to the qualities of the image.
4. Composition is important to the design of an image, bringing all of the visual elements together in concert to express the purpose of the image. Proper composition holds the viewer in the image and prompts the viewer to look where the creator intends. Effective composition can be pleasing or disturbing, depending on the intent of the image maker.
5. Lighting—the use and control of light—refers to how dimension, shape and roundness are defined in an image. Whether the light applied to an image is man-made or natural, proper use of it should enhance an image.
6. Style is defined in several ways as it applies to a creative image. It might be defined by a specific genre or simply be recognizable as the characteristics of how a specific artist applies light to a subject. It can impact an image in a positive manner when the subject matter and the style are appropriate for each other, or it can have a negative effect when they are at odds.
7. Presentation affects an image by giving it a finished look. The mats and borders used should support and enhance the image, not distract from it.
8. Center of Interest is the point or points on the image where the maker wants the viewer to stop as they view the image. There can be primary and secondary centers of interest. Occasionally there will be no specific center of interest when the entire scene collectively serves as the center of interest.
9. Subject Matter should always be appropriate to the story being told in an image.

10. Color Balance supplies harmony to an image. An image in which the tones work together, effectively supporting the image, can enhance its emotional appeal. Color balance is not always harmonious and can be used to evoke diverse feelings for effect.
11. Technique is the approach used to create the image. Lighting, posing, capture, presentation, and more are part of the technique applied to an image.
12. Story Telling refers to the image's ability to evoke imagination. One beautiful thing about art is that each viewer might collect his own message or read her own story in an image.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Watch for these trouble spots when producing the image:

1. Poor subject matter
2. Subject and background do not match
3. Poorly posed hands, especially in Portrait and Wedding category images
4. Unprofessional artwork visible
5. Photo cropped too closely, or not cropped enough to eliminate distracting elements
6. Poor clothing selections
7. Distracting backgrounds
8. Title does not explain the photograph
9. Lack of impact
10. Color casts
11. Lack of detail in the shadows or highlights (blocked up shadows or blown highlights)
12. The picture should tell the viewer a story, which may also be explained by the title.
13. The designs in abstract photos should be strong, with dynamic lines, interesting textures, and good color.
14. The photo should be simple and understandable, with no phony areas, and the subject should appeal to the viewer.
15. Photographs score lower if corrective work or retouching is noticeable. Visible "clone tracks" are a sure way to fall out of the merit category. Tone should not be too light or dark, and the subjects should not look crowded, awkward, or unbelievable.
16. It is highly recommended to add a border/matte and keyline to enhance the presentation of your photograph, just as one would when framing it for display.
17. Consult with peers/mentors for feedback and guidance on your submissions.

SECTION IV – Awards

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION AWARDS

The following awards are presented at each competition:

1. For scores of 80-100: PRESIDENT'S AWARD (purple/gold ribbon)
2. For scores of 85-89: Award of EXCELLENCE in Photography (blue/silver ribbon)
3. For scores of 90-94: Award for SUPERIOR Quality (blue/gold ribbon)
4. For scores of 95-100: Award for EXCEPTIONAL Quality (gold/purple ribbon)
5. Best of Category – Special trophies will be given for the best score in each category. All Best of Category entries in any competition must have scored at least 80.
6. Best of Show – At the end of the competition the three (3) highest scoring entries shall be reviewed for a “thumbs-up / thumbs-down” vote by the judges, who may vote for as many entries as they wish.

YEAR-END AWARDS

The following awards are presented each year at the End-of-Year Banquet in December.

Any member wishing to be eligible for the following awards must have entered a minimum of two (2) competitions during the calendar year.

Members entering less than two (2) competitions are not eligible, regardless of the scores their entries received.

1. Highest Scoring Photographs: Awarded to the three highest scoring photographs of the year.
2. President's Award: Awarded to the member who receives the most President's Awards during the calendar year.
 - a) President's Awards are awarded to all entries receiving a score of 80 or higher.
 - b) Plaques are awarded to the 2nd and 3rd place winners.
 - c) In case of a tie, the winner will be the member with the highest average score on all applicable entries.
3. Orlin Kohli Memorial Award: A traveling trophy given for the highest cumulative score for all entries (photographs or albums) by a member during the calendar year.
 - a) Plaques are awarded to the 2nd and 3rd place winners.
 - b) Award will be presented by the previous year recipient.

4. Rookie Of The Year Award: Eligibility: a member who, in the current calendar year, entered their first PPANI photographic competition.
 - a) Awarded to the eligible member whose total score, amongst their four (4) highest scoring photographs, is the highest.
 - b) First tiebreaker: highest scoring single photograph.
 - c) Second tiebreaker: highest number of entries.
 - d) Third tiebreaker: highest score amongst lowest scoring of the four photographs.

SECTION V – Judging Framework

JUDGING

1. The panel of judges will all be Masters of Photography or PPA-approved jurors.
2. At least one Master of Photography will serve on the jury of five judges and one alternate juror.
3. At no time may a judge score a print of which they know the maker. An alternate judge will score when this occurs.
4. Scoring will be on a 100-point perfect basis.
5. Standard PPA judging procedures will be followed.
6. Judges selected for the March Competition will usually not be members of PPANI.
7. The Jury Foreman may be a member of PPANI at the discretion of the PCC Chair.