



AN INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

Many PSA members have questions about international exhibitions—what they are and how to enter. This brochure answers such questions and introduces you to the challenge, fun, and satisfaction that exhibiting can bring.

What are exhibitions? Also known as “salons” or “internationals,” they are public showings of photographic slides, prints, and electronic images. Some have existed longer than PSA. Exhibitions held in the United States are among a large number held annually worldwide.

Who may enter? And should I enter? Anyone, whether a PSA member or not. Many photographers, especially those who do not assemble shows of their work, find this a terrific outlet for images already entered in club/council competitions. Others start entering exhibitions to see how their work will stand up against that of seasoned exhibitors. Most experience the satisfaction that comes from recognition of their work. Exhibitors receive a catalog of accepted entries, many of which are dazzling examples of the best work around the world.

Does PSA sponsor exhibitions? Only one: the PSA International Exhibition held in conjunction with the annual PSA International Conference of Photography. Other exhibitions are sponsored by national, regional and local photographic organizations that invite judges and set fees to cover expenses. If they meet PSA standards, they are recognized by the Society and can be counted toward PSA honors.

What kind of slides and prints can be entered in an exhibition? Most exhibitions have different sections: for color slides; nature slides & prints; photojournalism slides & prints; photo travel; pictorial prints, with sections for color and black & white, smaller and larger; stereo slides. With the growing popularity of electronic imaging, there are also exhibitions limited to images that are submitted and judged electronically (or digitally).

As indicated on entry forms, within sections there may be separate categories for different subjects. A nature section, for example, may add a special category for wildlife in addition to an “open” category. Each category is judged separately.

Can I enter each section? And how many slides and prints in each? You can enter one or more sections and categories, as noted on the entry form. Just make sure your images fit the section definition. For example, nature slides cannot show the “hand of man,” and domesticated animals are not eligible. These would be more appropriate for the color slide section.

Four slides or prints can be entered in each section or category. For a print exhibition, that could mean four each, black & white and color prints. If the nature section had both slides and prints, the entrant could submit four of each.

Entry forms answer questions like these. If in doubt, ask a seasoned exhibitor, or contact the exhibition or section chairman with your question.

What percentage of entries is accepted? Most exhibitions accept at least 20% of the total number of slides/prints entered; some as much as 40%. A given exhibitor may receive anywhere from none to four acceptances.

Who determines what awards are given? This is up to the sponsoring group. Two PSA medals are available for exhibitions recognized by the Society: a PSA Gold Medal awarded to the Best of Show in a particular section; and a PSA Silver Medal often given for the best in a special category. Others may be donated by individuals or the sponsoring group.

Are there rules about how exhibitions must be run? All exhibitions listed in the *PSA Journal* and on the PSA website conform to PSA standards, set forth in the Consolidated Exhibition Standards (CES). These were developed to insure that entries are handled with due care, and that exhibitions are run efficiently. They cover such aspects as light levels for viewing slides/prints and the dates by which report cards, entries, and catalogs must be mailed.

How long will my slides or prints be gone if I enter an exhibition? Entrants who have one or more acceptances in a section can expect them to be out for at least six weeks. If none are accepted, the entire entry will be mailed within a week or two of the judging. Exact dates for every phase are given on the entry form.

How does one get an entry form for an exhibition? Upcoming exhibitions are listed every month in the *PSA Journal* with the address of the person to contact for an entry form. In addition, entry forms can be downloaded from the PSA website (www.psa-photo.org)

How do slides and prints get selected for the public exhibition? Exhibitions have a minimum of three judges, or selectors, who view every image and vote on whether it should be accepted or not.

Different exhibitions use different scoring systems. A typical system involves a 1 to 5 range, making “15” the highest possible score for each image when there are three judges. A “1” indicates a rather weak image, while a “5” is reserved for outstanding images, often with medal or honorable mention potential. An exhibition may use other ranges such as 1 to 4 or 1 to 9. Another method is the “In or Out,” with judges using only 1’s and 0’s.

Selection is not a “judging” in the true sense. The judges are really evaluating entries and selecting the best for public showing. An image may be accepted in one exhibition, rejected in the next. While it is true that what appeals to different judges varies, this is not necessarily an inconsistency. It may also mean that, *in competition with a particular group of entries*, the image was not in the top. Imagine, if you will, a new color slide exhibition that receives *only* medal winners from previous exhibitions. Does the fact that only 20% or so can be accepted mean the rejected 80% are bad? Not at all! In summary, the process is a *relative* selection, not an *absolute* evaluation of an image.

How do I enter my slides and prints in an exhibition?

- Obtain its entry form and note the closing date—the date by which your entry must be received by the exhibition.
- Select four slides/prints for each section and category you enter. Images previously accepted in that exhibition section cannot be entered again.
- To protect them, slides can be put in glass mounts, or high quality duplicates can be submitted. Some thick plastic mounts and glass over cardboard are not acceptable, being too thick to fit into carousel trays. Test your mounts to be sure they will fit into the tray.
- Be sure your name and address and the image title are on each slide. For prints, the maker’s name and address and image title must appear in the upper left corner on the back.
- Decide the order you would like for those entries to be judged, then number the slides or prints accordingly. Mark the number on the back of the print. Make sure each slide is correctly “thumb spotted.” A sticky dot, numbered from 1 to 4, is put in the **lower left corner of the slide when held in correct (upright) viewing position**. Because the projectionist’s thumb will be on the dot when the slide is inserted for projection, the term “thumb spot” is used.
- Prints from the US are restricted to mounts not exceeding 16x20 inches. Prints sent overseas are usually unmounted. Specific requirements are noted on the entry forms.
- Complete the entry form, giving the title of each slide or print. If you want an image to be considered for a particular award being offered (such as contemporary), insert the “code” indicated on the entry form in the column following the title.

- Keep a record of slides or prints sent. Report cards usually refer to entries by number, and the catalog will not arrive for another several weeks.
- Submit the entry fee as prescribed by the exhibition and complete any labels included for report card, catalog, return of slides, and next year's entry form. If labels are used, make sure they are firmly adhered to avoid them falling off.
- Pack slides in a small box with protective material between each slide to guard against breakage of cover glass. Secure the box with a strong rubber band or tape. Insert the box of slides, entry form, entry fee, and labels in a tough envelope (the padded variety is best), and seal with shipping tape. Tape the shipping label to the envelope, or write the exhibition address clearly in ink. Don't forget your return address.
- Several entrants may ship their slides/prints in one package to reduce costs.
- Send entries by first class mail, or airmail for overseas exhibitions, in time to arrive by the closing date.
- Within a week after judging you will receive a report card with your results; on the entry form you can often opt to get this by e-mail. If there were no acceptances for an entrant, all his/her entries will arrive shortly thereafter.
- Accepted entries should be back a few days after the "accepted entries mailed by (date)" on the entry form.
- If one or more slides or prints are accepted, *all* slides or prints from that entrant are kept until all entries can be returned. In the case of a "group" mailing, nothing will be returned for any individual until all the work can be sent back.
- Exhibition catalogs are mailed about eight weeks after the exhibition. When the catalog arrives, check the listings for possible errors. If any are found, write the exhibition chairman for a correction. Many exhibitors also enjoy seeing which of their friends received acceptances.
- Keep your own record of exhibition acceptances. This is indispensable to checking for previous acceptances in an exhibition and for applying for Star Ratings. (Note that there is a separate brochure, similar to this one, that explains the star rating system.)

In the case of electronic imaging exhibitions, entries are submitted via computer or electronic media. Here, too, obtain and read the entry forms to learn exactly what to do.

If you have an opportunity to attend an exhibition, don't miss it! You will typically be able to enjoy a great show, learn what is being accepted, and see some outstanding images to inspire your own photographic efforts.