

ASP Fellowship

How It Works

by Don Emmerich

M.PHOTOG., M.ARTIST, M.EI, CR., API, HON. EA-ASP, F-ASP

& Doran Wilson

M.PHOTOG., M.EI, CR., API, F-ASP



Fellowship Committee

The ASP Fellowship is not only one of the most prestigious honors in photography, but it is also one of the most difficult to attain. To put this into perspective, consider that, while there are thousands and thousands of PPA Masters of Photography, there are currently only 118 ASP Fellows.

But don't let this discourage you. If you possess, not just the talent and creativity required of a great photographer, but also a deep commitment to earning an ASP Fellowship, this distinction may well be within your grasp.

In what follows, we'd like to briefly outline the requirements for earning a Fellowship, explain the distinctive characteristics of Fellowship judging, and offer a few personal tips and pointers.

Overview

In order to apply for an ASP Fellowship, you must be a member of both PPA and ASP for at least three consecutive years. You must also have earned at least 15 merit points since earning your Master's degree. You can check to see how many merit points you've earned at the PPA website, www.ppa.com.

If you meet these requirements, then you're welcome to apply for your Fellowship. What you'll need to do next is submit a Personal paper and portfolio, both of which will be evaluated by a panel of five judges.

Before further describing the Personal paper and portfolio, we should say a few things about Fellowship judging.

Fellowship Judging

When many hear that the Fellowship panel consists of five judges, they automatically assume that its judging methods are similar to those of PPA. But the number of judges is where the similarities end. Unlike their PPA counterparts, ASP judges do not use scoring machines, points, or a specified number of elements to determine an applicant's score. And they are not under any time constraints, but can spend as much time as they need to debate and discuss the merits of each applicant.

The identities of Fellowship judges are kept anonymous. The only people privy to their identities are the ASP President and ASP Fellowship committee, and, of course, the other Fellowship judges. This anonymity is meant to protect the judges from outside criticism, as certain judges in the past have been unfairly lambasted for decisions they have made.

Once someone has served as a Fellowship judge, he or she cannot judge again for the next two years. This can only help you as an applicant: if you're turned down for a Fellowship one year, you can reapply the next knowing that you'll have a fresh set of judges.

After viewing the ASP Fellowship process for several years now, we can confidently say that we've never seen anything that compares to its integrity and thoroughness. Applicants are treated fairly and their identities are closely guarded. The judges carefully scrutinize each Personal paper and portfolio and vote on each applicant, not once, but three times. After each vote, the judges have the opportunity for further debate and discussion.

The Personal paper

If you'd like to become an ASP Fellow, the first thing you'll need to do is prepare a Personal paper. Your Personal paper must be an original work that describes your life work, professional achievements, photographic philosophy, future aspirations, and major influences. Your Personal paper should be at least 2,000 words. Try to keep it brief and to the point.

Your Personal paper is a personal statement; so don't try to make it an exercise in technical writing or an instruction manual on how to take a photograph. Remember, your audience consists of five experienced photographers, so don't talk down to them, explaining the basics of f-stops, lighting ratios, etc. Rather share with them who you are, how you became a photographer, your artistic vision, and so on.

Also be sure to explain your portfolio. Describe some of the images the judges will view and how they exemplify your photographic philosophy, the journey you took to achieve them, and so on.

The Portfolio

After writing your Personal paper, at least the rough draft, you can move onto preparing your portfolio. Your portfolio should consist of 25 of your finest images. These prints need to complement your Personal paper and further tell the judges about you and your photographic vision.

Since your prints will initially be viewed together, make sure that they work together in telling your story. Don't be afraid to pull a particular image, no matter how great it is, if it takes attention away from your other prints. For instance, if 24 of your prints are black-and-whites and one is a sepia tone, the sepia will more than likely take attention away from the other images and hurt your overall portfolio.

Make sure that each print is impeccably printed and mounted. When using images from print competitions, don't use the actual prints from those competitions, as they will probably be marked and scuffed.

A photograph is worth a thousand words. Here are the portfolios of four ASP Fellows.

The first is from William Branson, III.



William Branson, F-ASP

William's images—all impeccably printed and mounted to canvas—perfectly complements his Personal paper. Note how all his flesh tones are consistent and match.

Next let's look at Jim Chagares' portfolio.



Jim Chagares, F-ASP

Jim's love, passion, and excitement for photography are elegantly portrayed here. Notice how he puts the high key images in the center. These pull viewers in without distracting them from the other wonderful images. You might also want to go online and check out Jim's very illuminating Personal paper.

The next portfolio we'd like to share with you is that of Dennis Hammon. Dennis describes his passion and journey into wildlife and landscape photography.



Dennis Hammon, F-ASP

As you can see, Dennis has a great eye for graphic and color in nature. His mixture of colors and shapes—reds and greens, squares and verticals—combines to create a beautiful balance. And notice how well every image works together, never competing with the others. This truly is the presentation of an ASP Fellow.

Finally, here's Dave Huntsman's portfolio.



Dave Huntsman, F-ASP

After reading Dave's Personal paper, you're given an appreciation for the strengths, which have made him such a fantastic photographer. And his beautiful, vivid language creates expectations that are more than met when viewing his magnificent portfolio.

We hope this helps you understand the process better when applying for your ASP Fellowship.