



America Society of Photographers “Images of Distinction” Competition Rules

IMAGES OF DISTINCTION COMPETITIONS

The purpose of this competition is to allow photographers to enter digital files to be judged against a standard of excellence using the 12 Elements of a Merit Image. (For more information concerning the twelve elements, go to [PPA 12 Elements of a Merit Image](#).)

Two competitions will be held each year: Round 1 and Round 2. Round 1 will be held in the spring and is open to ASP members and non-members. Round 2 is held in late summer and is open to members only.

Round 2 will take place on **September 6, 2025**, with no panel discussion to follow.

Round 2:

- In Round 2, there will be one round of judging with no commentary on the following day. The only live discussion will be challenge discussions during judging.
- Held in the late summer, Round 2 will ideally take place before registration for PPA’s IPC closes.
- Round 2 is open to members only. Members may enter up to twelve (12) images. Only the highest scoring four (4) images will count toward the ASP Artistry Award.
- Any image that received a score of 80 or higher in Round 1 may be entered as a sealed image directly into Round 2 (untouched, with no further edits or improvements). The original score will carry over, and the image will not be judged again.
- If the maker chooses to ‘break the seal’ (make changes, improvements, or edits to the image that received a score of 80 or higher in Round 1) and enter it into Round 2, it will be judged for a new score.
- First, second, and third place trophies will be awarded for categories.
- Images that receive a score of 80 to 84 will receive the ASP Seal of Approval.
- Images that receive a score of 85 or higher will receive the ASP Seal of Distinction.
- Images that receive a score of 85 or higher in Round 2 will be included in the ASP Best of the Best Collection. This includes images that received a score of 85 or higher in Round 1 and were entered as sealed images into Round 2.

The following rules pertain to images entered as digital files that are created by any photographic processes. All Images of Distinction entries must be registered at www.printcompetition.com under the ASP competition link.

GENERAL INFORMATION (Read before proceeding to category rules.)

A. Fees

1. Early entries: ASP members will pay \$20.00 per image that is registered by 1:00 a.m. (Eastern time) on August 1.
2. Late entries: ASP members will pay \$25.00 per image that is registered between 11:00 a.m. (Eastern time) on August 11 and 11:00 a.m. (Eastern time) on September 1. No registrations will be accepted after 11:00 a.m. (Eastern time) on September 1.

B. Members may enter up to twelve (12) images in Round 2. No changes to your entry are permitted once the entry deadline has passed. No refunds will be issued after the entry fee is paid.

C. Eligible images include:

- Images that have received a Merit or Imaging Excellence score in Merit Image Review (MIR)
- Images that were entered into IPC in 2023 or later, but did not receive a Top 32 designation
- Fresh images that have not yet been entered into a competition
- Images that have been entered into a previous Images of Distinction competition that have not received a score of 80 or higher
- Images from other image competitions, except those excluded below

Images that are NOT eligible include:

- Images that have been selected for the World Cup competition
- Images that have received a Top 32 designation in any IPC category
- Images that merited in any IPC prior to 2023
- Images that scored an 80 or higher in any previous ASP image competition
- Images that have received an ASP District Award
- Images that have received an ASP Medallion Award

D. AI Statement: No entry in any category can be created in part or whole using text-to-image prompts that use Artificial Intelligence (AI) image-generating technology software that is intended to create whole images and backgrounds entirely from programmed images. A human must have had creative control over the work's expression. Images and their elements must be created with traditional elements of authorship. However, non-text-to-image prompted elements (such as Photoshop's automations like generative expand) may be used in image creation.

Images that are determined to violate the AI statement above will be disqualified. AI Images that are disqualified are not eligible to receive a score and cannot be entered into another IOD competition. If the disqualification is determined after a score has been given, that image will have the score voided and will not be eligible for awards or inclusion in any ASP digital or printed material.

PHOTOGRAPHIC OPEN RULES

- A. The Photographic Open Competition is to show the photographic knowledge and skill set of the maker. However, a maker can use supporting photographic elements that they did not create, provided those elements are referenced as guide images on the face of the entry. This includes sky replacement. The original photographic capture by the entrant should be merit-worthy independent of the work that was not their own. Elements created by the maker must not be part of the guide images. This rule also applies to images within an album entry.
- B. All processing, manipulation, and printing or rendering were done by the entrant or under their direct supervision.
- C. The entrant has obtained and has access to all necessary releases (model or property) and agrees to hold ASP harmless against all claims and liabilities arising out of any ASP display, publication, promotion, or other use of each image submitted to ASP's image competition.
- D. The entrant's name, initials, business logo, watermark, or other identifying features shall not appear anywhere in the entry.
- E. 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.
- F. 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 and will not be judged, accepted, or displayed. If an entry, in the good-faith opinion of the ASP Image Competition Committee, violates copyright, trademark, or any other applicable law, that entry shall not be displayed or published. Furthermore, this image will also be disqualified from consideration for awards selection and will not be awarded points toward the Photographic Artistry Award.
- G. Entries of the same subject in multiple images will be allowed if the images are entirely different concepts. If entries of the same subject do not have entirely different concepts, only one of the same-subject images will be accepted into the competition. The other same-subject image(s) will be disqualified. The IOD Image Competition Committee will make every effort to monitor entries and notify the maker of same-subject images prior to the registration deadline.

If the same-subject images are not identified prior to the registration deadline, the image that appears first in the maker's entry list on printcompetition.com will be accepted and any other same-subject images that are not entirely different concepts will be disqualified.

If the disqualification is determined after a score has been given, that image will have the score voided and will not be eligible for awards or inclusion in any ASP digital or printed material. *The IOD Image Competition Chair has the authority to disqualify images under this provision.*

- H. Images not of acceptable ASP exhibition content will be judged but may not be displayed. The decision of acceptable content will be based on the standards set by the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., and at the discretion of the ASP Image Competition Committee.

PHOTOGRAPHIC OPEN COMPETITION CATEGORIES

You must designate one of the below categories for each entry.

General Portrait – Images can portray a subject or subjects from all walks of life and should reflect the personality of the subject(s).

Children – This subcategory must contain a child or children from birth to age 16.

High School Senior – This subcategory portrays a male or female age 16 to 18.

Animal – This subcategory captures an animal(s) portrait using structured lighting in a studio or outdoor environment, where the owner or photographer control the animal.

Illustrative/Commercial – This sub-category is for capturing industry, advertising, and architectural areas.

Landscape/Nature – This sub-category shares joy and adventures while expressing a sense of place. Wild animals in an uncontrolled lighting environment, zoo animals, flowers, seascapes, cityscapes, urban landscapes, and sunsets with or without people can be placed here.

Illustrative/General – This sub-category is for still-life images and any other image that does not fit in another Illustrative category. Albums displaying portrait and storytelling in a non-wedding event or session may be entered in this category.

Reportage – Images that illustrate an actual public or non-public event, life, an area of human interest, telling news that have meaning on the context or record of events, high impact, and/or lasting emotional response. Images that illustrate sporting events are included in this category. ONLY basic color and brightness adjustments, cropping, removal of sensor dust spots, dodging and burning are allowed. Only single-capture images will be accepted. Composite and multiple exposure images will not be accepted. The original captured image (in RAW or JPEG) must be available if requested by the committee.

NOTE: The ASP Image Competition Committee reserves the right to recategorize your images, if the committee feels that an image has been entered into the wrong category.

ARTIST CATEGORY RULES

There will be two categories within the artist category:

1. Artist Open
2. Restoration

A. Entries may be created in various artistic mediums. Photographs may be used in this category in creating an entry, but it is not a requirement. Entries may include freehand drawing or painting in traditional or digital applications. Entries can include stock photography, photographs, or

artwork from other artist(s) with written consent to use those sources. Documentation may be requested by ASP before, during, or after the competition. If an entry, in the good-faith opinion of the ASP Image Competition Committee, violates copyright, trademark, or any other applicable law and cannot be proven otherwise, that entry shall not be displayed or published. Furthermore, this image will also be disqualified from consideration for awards selection and will not be awarded points toward the Photographic Artistry Award.

- B. All processing, manipulation, artwork, or rendering must be done by the entrant.
- C. The entrant's name, initials, business logo, watermark, or other identifying features shall not appear anywhere in or on the face of the entry.
- D. 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.
- E. Entries of the same subject in multiple images will be allowed if the images are entirely different concepts. If entries of the same subject do not have entirely different concepts, only one of the same-subject images will be accepted into the competition. The other same-subject image(s) will be disqualified. The IOD Image Competition Committee will make every effort to monitor entries and notify the maker of same-subject images prior to the registration deadline.

If the same-subject images are not identified prior to the registration deadline, the image that appears first in the maker's entry list on printcompetition.com will be accepted and any other same-subject images that are not entirely different concepts will be disqualified.

If the disqualification is determined after a score has been given, that image will have the score voided and will not be eligible for awards or inclusion in any ASP digital or printed material. *The IOD Image Competition Chair has the authority to disqualify images under this provision.*

- F. Guide images must be included on the face of the entry. For restorations, it is recommended that, in addition to the guide image for the image being restored, two guide images that show the progress of the restoration be included.

WEDDING CATEGORY RULES

- A. The Wedding Category consists of:
 - 1. Images that portray a subject or subjects from all aspects of a wedding including traditional portraits, candid, or detail work. Wedding themed images taken outside of the time constraints of the wedding event should be entered in the PO portrait or illustrative category, depending on the content.
 - 2. Multiple images may be combined into a digital album collection exclusively showcasing a specific wedding.
- B. Entrant must have captured and created the original exposure or exposures during the time constraints of the actual wedding event.
- C. All processing, manipulation, and rendering were done by the entrant or under their direct

supervision.

- D. The entrant has obtained and has access to all necessary releases (model or property) and agrees to hold ASP harmless against all claims and liabilities arising out of any ASP's display, publication, promotion, or other use of each image submitted to ASP.
- E. The entrant's name, initials, business logo, watermark, or other identifying features shall not appear anywhere in or on the face of the entry.
- F. 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.
- G. 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 and will not be judged, accepted, or displayed. If an entry, in the good-faith opinion of the ASP Image Competition Committee, violates copyright, trademark, or any other applicable law, that entry shall not be displayed or published. Furthermore, this image will also be disqualified from consideration for awards selection and will not be awarded points toward the Photographic Artistry Award.
- H. Entries of the same subject in multiple images will be allowed if the images are entirely different concepts. If entries of the same subject do not have entirely different concepts, only one of the same-subject images will be accepted into the competition. The other same-subject image(s) will be disqualified. The IOD Image Competition Committee will make every effort to monitor entries and notify the maker of same-subject images prior to the registration deadline.

If the same-subject images are not identified prior to the registration deadline, the image that appears first in the maker's entry list on printcompetition.com will be accepted and any other same-subject images that are not entirely different concepts will be disqualified.

If the disqualification is determined after a score has been given, that image will have the score voided and will not be eligible for awards or inclusion in any ASP digital or printed material. *The IOD Image Competition Chair has the authority to disqualify images under this provision.*

- I. Images not of acceptable ASP exhibition content will be judged but may not be displayed. The decision of acceptable content will be based on the standards set by the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., and at the discretion of the ASP Image Competition Committee.

STRAIGHT OUT OF CAMERA (SOOC) RAW CATEGORY RULES

The intent of this category is to evaluate the art created in-camera without any post-production applied, including RAW adjustments in or out of the camera. Only RAW files may be entered in this category.

- A. The purpose of this competition is to allow the entry of non-manipulated, camera-native imagery. This category is designed for images which come straight from the camera. You

- must enter your unedited, unmanipulated RAW image.
- B. The image must have been captured by the entrant alone.
 - C. No images taken under the direction or supervision of an instructor or in a class setting are allowed.
 - D. The entrant's name, initials, business logo, watermark, or other identifying features shall not appear anywhere in or on the face of the image.
 - E. If an entry, in the good-faith opinion of the ASP Image Competition Committee, violates copyright, trademark, or any other applicable law, that entry shall not be displayed or published. Furthermore, this image will also be disqualified from consideration for awards selection and will not be awarded points toward the Photographic Artistry Award.
 - F. RAW entries created using cell phone or drone images are not allowed.**
 - G. Only images submitted in native camera raw file format may be entered. No image submitted in jpg, psd, tiff, or other "second generation" file format will be accepted in this category.

SOOC RAW FAQs

- A. **How do I enter the RAW category?** After registering for ASP IOD competition, select "RAW" as the category for an entry and upload the RAW file (in native camera format) you wish to enter.
- B. **How are the images judged?** Every RAW file contains an embedded JPEG. This is used by cameras to show image previews in the camera (LCD/Viewfinder). ASP IOD officials will extract the embedded JPEG, and this file will be used for judging.
- C. **Can I apply presets in the camera?** Yes, in-camera presets (picture styles) can be applied, such as Monochrome mode, etc. The embedded JPEG will have those presets applied and will be used for judging.
- D. **Do I need presentation for SOOC RAW entries?** No. As RAW files are entered, and embedded JPEGs are judged, no additional presentation is allowed or possible.
- E. **What can I use to view the JPEG embedded in the RAW file?** ASP IOD will use Photo Mechanic to extract the JPEG from the RAW file. Additionally, there are some free RAW preview extractors available.
- F. **Are there any other ways to know what the JPEG looks like?** While photographing, capture both RAW and JPEG, and the JPEG file can help visualize the image that will be judged.
- G. **Can I enter images created with in-camera techniques like double exposure, gels, shutter drag, etc.?** Yes, absolutely! Your creativity with in-camera techniques is your limit.

VIEWING CONDITIONS FOR IMAGE REVIEW

For color management help, see Video Tutorial: [IPC Participant Resources](#)

Note: ASP Competition judges will be instructed to calibrate their monitors to these specifications just prior to the competition: Digital Files: Monitor Settings, D65, 120 cd/m², 2.20 gamma.

DIGITAL IMAGE ENTRY SPECIFICATIONS

NOTE: Failure to comply with these rules may result in disqualification of the entry. The decision of the ASP Image Competition Committee is final.

Single Image Entry

- A. RAW files will be accepted for the SOOC RAW category only. There is no file size limit for the SOOC RAW category.
- B. In all other categories, 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. In most cases, the total file size should not exceed 3.5 MB. Larger files will be accepted when necessary, so long as they are set to the best JPEG quality.

Album Entry

- A. Album pages will be combined into a .zip file prior to uploading the album entry to www.printcompetition.com.
- B. You must include a gray spread with your album title on the page as your PAGE ONE.
- C. Maximum Viewable Canvas Size: 2560x1600 in a horizontal page format.
- D. A page may represent a single album page or a spread.
- E. A page may contain as few or as many images as desired.
- F. Entry may contain up to 36 canvases or spreads.
- G. Each page or spread must contain an embedded color profile of either sRGB or Adobe RGB1998 and be saved at the best JPEG quality setting.
- H. Identify pages sequentially in the order to be viewed using the following three-digit format. Example: (001.jpg, 002.jpg, 003.jpg, 004.jpg, etc.)
- I. All pages of an album must be in one folder. Please zip the contents into one file and upload to www.printcompetition.com.
- J. The entrant's name, initials, business name, watermark, or other identifying features may not appear anywhere in the album title or on any spread in the entry.

AWARDS

Category Awards:

The top 10 scoring images and ties from ASP members, in each category, will be judged head-to-head, and judges will select the top three images. In Round 2, trophies will be awarded to the first, second, and third place finishers in each category.

Judge's Choice Awards:

Each judge will select their favorite overall image for the Judge's Choice Award from images that receive a score of 80 or higher. Judge's Choice Award winners will receive certificates of recognition.

Best of the Best:

The images included in the ASP Best of the Best Collection are:

- Images that received a Seal of Distinction in Round 1 and were entered into Round 2 with an unbroken seal.
- Images that received a Seal of Distinction in Round 2.
- Images that were selected as State Elite winners by state community network partners (formerly known as 'affiliates'.)

ASP Artistry Award points

ASP Artistry Award points can only be earned in Round 2. An ASP member's four (4) highest scoring images that receive a score of 80 or higher in an IOD competition each year will be counted toward the points required to achieve the ASP Artistry Award.