

PREPARING
FOR
COMPETITION



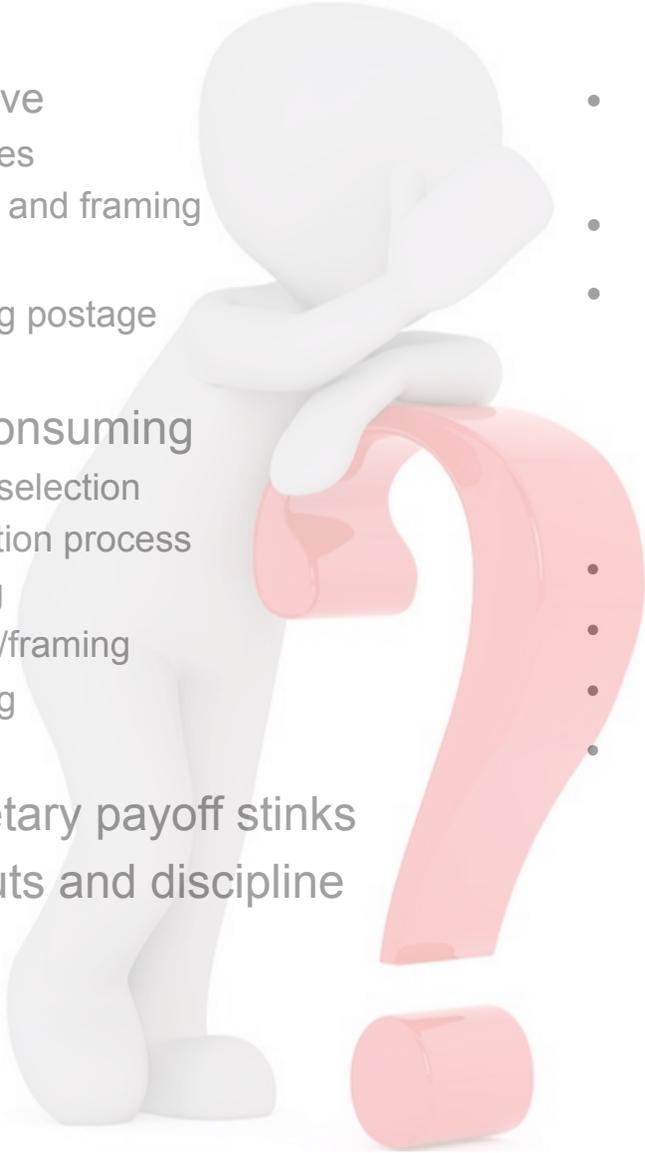
Caveat: this presentation is oriented towards fine art photography competitions

Other genres, such as: wedding photography, senior photography and the Pulitzer Prize may skew differently. However, certain concepts herein should be broad enough to cover the many categories of photography.



Why do this at all?

Because half of life is showing up.
(what's the other half?)

- 
- It's expensive
 - entry fees
 - Printing and framing
 - Crating
 - Shipping postage
 - Travel
 - It's time consuming
 - Editing/selection
 - Application process
 - Logging
 - Printing/framing
 - Shipping
 - Travel
 - The monetary payoff stinks
 - It takes guts and discipline
 - Path toward building awareness of your work
 - Build an Audience
 - Establish “industry” relationships
 - Jurors
 - Gallery/venue owners
 - Editors
 - Media
 - Building confidence
 - Building discipline
 - Building your CV
 - Hey, you might actually sell something.

Expert advice



Mary Virginia Swanson

Advisor to Artists and
Arts Organizations

Suggestion:

Buy “Swanny’s” book,

THE BUSINESS OF
PHOTOGRAPHY:

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES.

If you have amassed a group of images that you feel proud of, **I encourage you to put your work in front of industry professionals to be considered for recognition amongst your peers.** Every competition will have one or more designated Jurors whose activities you should research. Should you wish to see your photographs being included in their gallery, exhibitions or publications, herein begins the process of entering a photography competition.

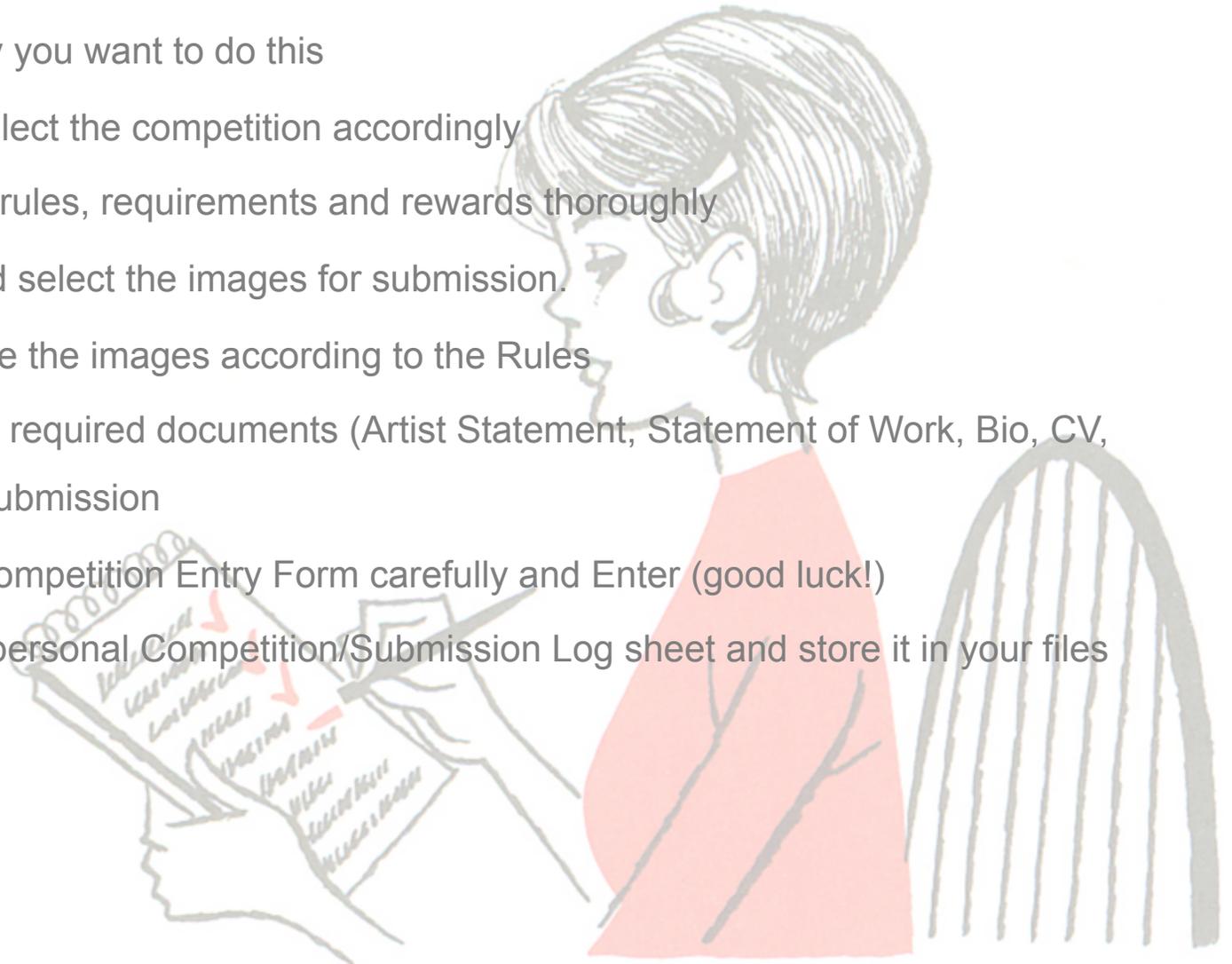
My advice is to invest only in those competitions that advance your career goals. Are the Jurors individuals you have targeted as professionals you hoped to share your work with one day? Will there be broad promotion of the selected photographs in print and online? Will there be an exhibition of the selected works?

Some competitions offer those who are accepted inclusion in a printed exhibition catalogue, others offer purchase awards, while others assign cash awards.

Sharing your photographs with a broader audience will put your work in front of new communities, and move you onward to new creative projects.

The List

1. Understand why you want to do this
2. Evaluate and select the competition accordingly
3. Understand the rules, requirements and rewards thoroughly
4. Review, edit and select the images for submission.
5. Process and size the images according to the Rules
6. Have your other required documents (Artist Statement, Statement of Work, Bio, CV, etc.) ready for submission
7. Complete the Competition Entry Form carefully and Enter (good luck!)
8. Complete your personal Competition/Submission Log sheet and store it in your files



Logging the Entry

Your Checklist and data points

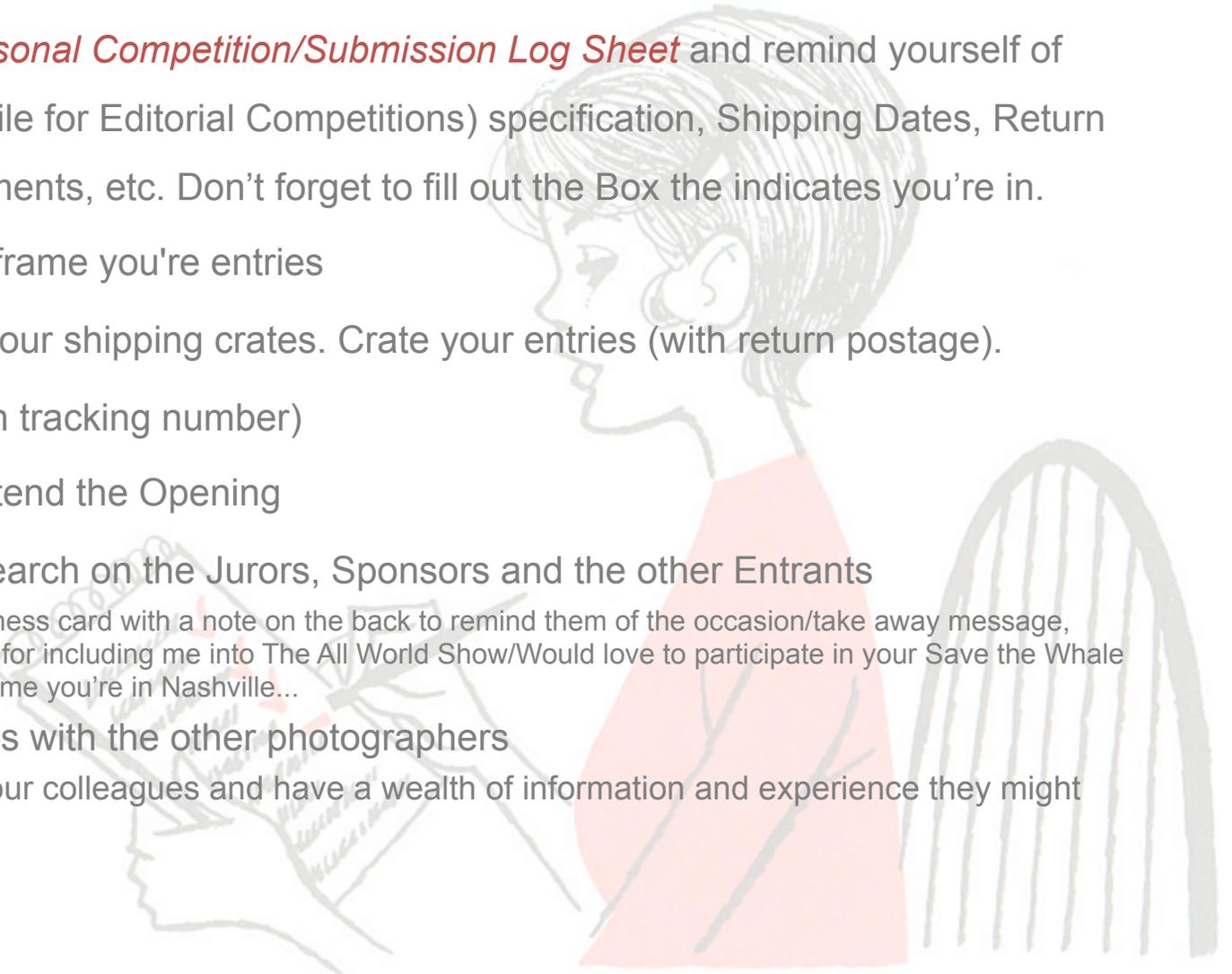
- What is your percentage of success?
- What images have succeeded most?
- What themes have worked best?
- What type of juror relates to your work best (photo editor, museum curator)?

| ndantona fine art photography Contest Submission form | |
|---|---|
| ART OF PHOTOGRAPHY 09 | |
| Deadline: MAY 22, 2009 | |
| Contest Sponsor: Art of Photography | |
| Contest Title: Art of Photography 09 | |
| Website: www.www.artofphotographyshow.com | |
| Address: Art of Photography Show 3830 Valley Centre Drive Suite 705 San Diego, CA 92130 | |
| Phone: 858-793-0900 | Contact: Steven Churchill / steven@artofphotographyshow.com |
| Jurors: Charlotte Cotton is the curator and head of the Wallis Annenberg Department of Photography at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). Before joining the museum in 2007, Charlotte was curator of photographs at the Victoria and Albert Museum (1992-2004), the head of programming at The Photographers Gallery (2004-2005) in London. She moved to the US in 2005 and has been visiting professor at Yale University and visiting critic at colleges including Bard, SVA, Cranbrook, Otis, Art Institute Chicago, USC, and UC Riverside. She is the author of Imperfect Beauty (2000), Guy Bourdin (2003), Then Things Went Quiet (2003) and The Photograph as Contemporary Art (2005). She is also the founding editor of wordswithoutpictures.org. | |
| Prizes: 1 st : \$2k, 2 nd : \$1.6k, 3 rd : \$1.2 | |
| Entry Fees: \$40 | Payment Method: PayPal Trans. ID: |
| Entry Requirements: Uploaded jpg @1500px | |
| Entry Ship Date Deadline : July 17, 2009 | Entry Ship Method: |
| Tracking Number: | Shipment Received by Gallery?: |
| Acceptance Notification Date: June 21, 2009 | Accepted?: NO |
| Pieces Submitted: 1.Bleeker Street 1, 2. Jersey Tracks 3.NYC ViewMaster 4.Dreaming of Paradise | |
| Pieces Accepted: | |
| Size Requirements: | |
| Artwork Shipped Date: | Artwork Ship Method: |
| Tracking #: | Shipment Received by Gallery?: |
| Reception Date: Aug. 29 th , 2009 | Reception Attended?: |
| Show Dates: 29AUG – 1NOV 09 | |
| Prizes Awarded : Prizes Received Date: | |
| Pickup Arranged by: | Pickup Date: |
| Tracking #: | Return Shipment Received?: |
| Prize Received: | Follow-up Letter: |

The List

You're in!!

1. Go to your *Personal Competition/Submission Log Sheet* and remind yourself of the Print (or the file for Editorial Competitions) specification, Shipping Dates, Return Postage requirements, etc. Don't forget to fill out the Box the indicates you're in.
2. Print, matte and frame your entries
3. Create/prepare your shipping crates. Crate your entries (with return postage).
4. Ship Entries (with tracking number)
5. Make plans to attend the Opening
6. Review your research on the Jurors, Sponsors and the other Entrants
 - Hand them a business card with a note on the back to remind them of the occasion/take away message, etc. / e.g. Thanks for including me into The All World Show/Would love to participate in your Save the Whale Foundation/Next time you're in Nashville...
7. Make connections with the other photographers
 - These are your colleagues and have a wealth of information and experience they might share



The List

You're Out

1. Don't get discouraged. "No" is a big part of the art business.
2. Fill out your *Personal Competition/Submission Log Sheet* accordingly.
3. Drink wine (don't drive).
4. Make more art.
5. Research next competition



Building Your Curriculum Vitae

Don't get discouraged.

Even though there aren't any really impressive accomplishments on mine, it says:

- He's serious, not just fooling around.
- He's plugging away, perhaps it's just a matter of time.
- He's experienced. He knows the ropes.
- It doesn't have to say: he's a great photographer who gets into all the best shows (although that'd be nice).

Take a look at the Jurors

nick dantona fine art photography art commerce

Selected Exhibitions:

SouthSoutheast: Portraits
Molena, GA
Juror: Elizabeth Avedon
November 11-December 15 2017

Slow Exposures: The Rural South
Zebulon GA
Jurors: Jerry Atnip & John Bennett
Sept. 17-20 2015

Slow Exposures: The Rural South
Zebulon GA
Jurors: Alexa Dilworth/Center for Documentary Studies-Duke University
Aline Smithsonian/Publisher Lenscratch
Sept. 19-28th 2014

The Arts Company
Nashville TN
How the West Was One Exhibit
Juror: Anne Brown Ph D
March 1 - April 2 2014

Gallery One
Nashville, TN
The Light Photo Exhibition
Jurors: Elizabeth Avedon, William & Jennifer Frist
June 21- August 1 2013

Alfred Williams Gallery
Nashville, TN
Shadow Hour Exhibit
Juror: Sera Davis
November 1st - January 15th 2013

The Arts Company
Nashville, TN
Southern Light Exhibit
Gallerist: Anne Brown
January 7- February 23 2012

1st Gallery
Palm Springs, CA
Earth Through a Lens
Jurors: Colin Westerbeck/Director California Museum of Photography
Pulitzer Prize Winner Jack Dykinga
March 15 - April 11, 2011

Camera Obscura Gallery
Denver, CO
The Art of Photography Today 2
Juror: Hal Gould
December 10 - February 11, 2011

Delta Center for the Arts/LH Horton Jr. Gallery
Stockton, CA
Contrasting Landscapes
Juror: Carol McCusker Ph.D
November 18 - December 16 2010

Target Gallery @ The Torpedo Factory
Alexandria, VA
5x5: Small Works in Photography
Juror: Kathleen Ewing/Exec. Dir. Assoc. of Int'l Photography Art Dealers
November 6 - November 21 2010

The Light Factory Contemporary Museum of Photography and Film
Third Juried Annuale
Juror: Alex Nyerges
Director/Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Apr. 19th - Aug. 15th 2010

PhotoSpiva 2010 Exhibition
George A. Spiva Center for the Arts /Joplin, MO
Juror: Deborah Klochco
Director/ Museum of Photographic Arts/San Diego
March 6th - April 25th 2010

Harpeth River Watershed Association Exhibition
Terrazzo/ Nashville, TN
Juror: John Guider
March 6th - March 13th 2010

The Tennessee State Museum: Nashville TN
Historic event- The People's House: A Temple of Democracy,
150th Anniversary of the Volunteer State Capitol
Executive Director of the State Museum:Lois Riggins-Ezzell
Curator & Development Director Tennessee State Museum: Reneé White
April 1 - Aug. 9, 2009

Permanent Collections

Tennessee State Museum
Creative Arts Agency
Pinnacle Bank
Regions Bank
Cumberland Heights Foundation
The Indigo Hotel/Nashville

Awards

Pollux Award First Prize
World-Wide Photography Gala Awards, August 2011
Curator: Larry Padget - Founder/Center for Fine Art Photography

Pollux Award Third Prize
World-Wide Photography Gala Awards, August 2011
Curator: Larry Padget - Founder/Center for Fine Art Photography

International Color Awards
Masters Cup - Nominee

Worldwide Photography Gala
Dominant Color Exhibit - Finalist

Best in Show
Art of Photography Today 2
Camera Obscura Gallery (Denver)

The Jacob Riis Award 2010- Finalist
World Wide Photo Gala

Publications

The Oxford American - September 2014
L'Oeil de la Photographie - September 2014
South x Southeast Magazine - September 2014
Nashville Arts Magazine - December 2012 issue
Nashville Arts Magazine - January 2012 issue
Palm Springs Life - June 2011 Issue
ShutterBug May 2008 Issue

Don't get cute. Go classic gallery style

Preparing your work

Follow Instructions!

Typically, something like this would be the requirements:

- Image size not larger than 20x30"
- 1-2" white matt (minimum 4ply)
- 1-2" black (non-metal) frame
- Identifying info label on back of frame
- Plexiglas, not glass
- Return postage

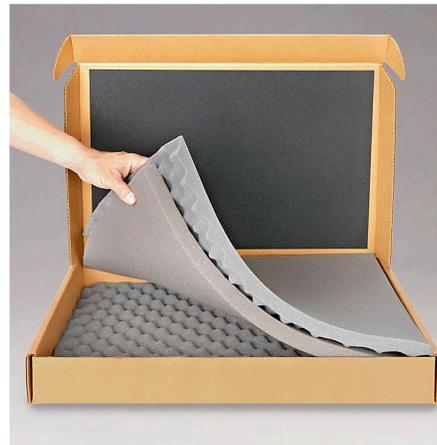


Crating your work

Protect your work

- Artwork that arrives compromised will not be exhibited
- I used to use wooden crates
 - Too heavy
 - More expensive to ship
 - Too difficult for exhibitor to ship back

17 x 22 1/2 x 3" 350 lb. Deluxe Artwork Shipper



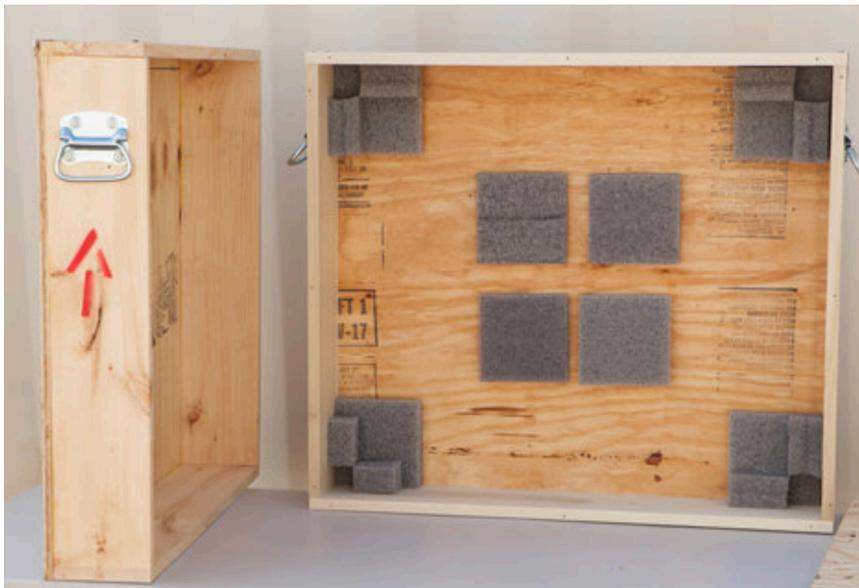
[Enlarge](#)

Protection for your most valuable artwork.

- Heavy duty plastic-lined top and bottom prevent punctures.
- Artwork floats between thick, soft foam pillows.
- Foam is removable.
- Approved by most major air and ground carriers, including UPS and FedEx®.

About \$50

| MODEL NO. | INSIDE DIMENSIONS W x L x H | FITS MAX FRAME SIZE | TEST | PRICE PER BOX | | | ADD TO CART |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------------|------|---------------|------|------|--|
| | | | | 1 | 5 | 10+ | |
| S-17580 | 17 x 22 1/2 x 3" | 14 x 19 x 2" | 350# | \$49 | \$46 | \$43 | 1 <input type="text"/> ADD |



50 x 50 x 4" 500 lb. Double Wall Deluxe Artwork Shipper



[Enlarge](#)

Protection for your most valuable artwork.

- Heavy duty plastic-lined top and bottom prevent punctures.
- Artwork floats between thick, soft foam pillows.
- Foam is removable.

| MODEL NO. | INSIDE DIMENSIONS W x L x H | FITS MAX FRAME SIZE | TEST | PRICE PER BOX | | | ADD TO CART |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------|---------------|-------|-------|--|
| | | | | 1 | 5 | 10+ | |
| S-16376 | 50 x 50 x 4" | 47 x 47 x 3" | 500# DW | \$201 | \$188 | \$175 | 1 <input type="text"/> ADD |

SHIPS VIA MOTOR FREIGHT

About \$200

Show Up to the Opening!

- Show up informed
- Show up with business cards or something promotional
- Pen and Paper (take notes)
- A Camera! Take pictures and have someone take your picture with
 - Your displayed work
 - The Juror
 - You and the Juror in front of your work
 - You and the other photographers



How to evaluate photo competitions

(taken from lensculture.com)

1. Hosting Organization

1. Look for organizations that are well-known and well-respected in the international photography world.
2. Influential organizations can provide winning photographers with meaningful exposure that can lead to career-building opportunities.
3. Look for organizations that are dedicated to photography and have a history of recognizing talented photographers.

2. The Jury

1. An influential jury panel with decision making power in the photography community can be one of the greatest assets offered to you when entering a photo competition.
2. Think about whether or not the people on the jury can help your work be featured, published, shown or acquired.
3. Connections to publications, galleries, festivals and an influential network in the photography world are important with both international and regional jurors.
4. A well-connected advocate of your work can be invaluable in helping you further your career.

3. Exposure Opportunities: Exhibitions

1. Exhibitions are great for your CV and can help to legitimize you in the photography community.
2. That said, there is a wide range of exhibition prestige, so it's worth looking into where a show will be, if it's offered, and who will be in attendance.
3. Invitations to press and private previews are a great perk, so think about the hosting organization's connections and try to find documentation of previous exhibitions they have hosted. (e.g. Nashville Arts)

How to evaluate photo competitions

(taken from lensculture.com)

4. Exposure Opportunities: Printed Publications

- a. Having your photographs included in a printed publication of award-winning work has long lasting benefits, and can help put you and your work in front of important people who may not be able to attend an exhibition.
- b. **A book or catalog is more permanent than an exhibition and it also allows more people to see your work in context with the other winning photographers.** Printed publications are often used as reference tools and resources for serious professionals. And they offer yet another opportunity for experts all around the world to discover you and your work.
- c. Less expensive: no printing, framing or shipping costs

5. Exposure Opportunities: Online

- a. Online promotion can exponentially increase awareness of your work in the photography community.
- b. Consider the audience reach of the hosting-organization and how active their online forums, social networks, and websites are.
- c. **The power of the Internet has the potential to make content go viral and sometimes can account for overnight success stories.**

6. Cash Awards

- a. Awards or grants can keep your practice alive and allow you to focus more attention on your photography.
- b. Other components of an award are actually much more valuable than money — such as having your work included in exhibitions or printed publications. **Being broadly seen around the world can be much more valuable to your career than a cash prize.**

How to evaluate photo competitions

(taken from lensculture.com)

7. Theme

- a. Themed competitions (Wildlife, Sports, Music, Architecture) can be helpful by offering you an opportunity that is particular to your specialty.
- b. While not all competitions have themes, you might be asked to submit to a specific category or genre.
- c. Take the time to look into themes and categories that best represent your work to maximize your shot at being selected for an award.
- d. Nick's dirty little secret: I'll enter very specific images that I want the juror to see that have nothing to do with the theme. I think of it as an inexpensive marketing ploy. I mean, there's no way I'm going to get a meeting with most of these people so...
- e. Be proactive: develop a body of work specifically for that competition and those jurors (e.g. Slow Exposures)

8. Eligibility

- a. Read the rules and guidelines for eligibility carefully.
- b. Make sure you fit any requirements for age, location, themes and levels.
- c. Pay attention to instructions about the number of images you can submit, naming and numbering the photos, or adding captions and text.
- d. Make sure your work fits any size, quality, color, or skill level requirements particular to the competition.

9. Photographer Rights

- a. You should always retain all copyrights to your own work. Competitions may want to use your winning photographs to help publicize you and your work (which is great!), but make sure it's done fairly.
- b. You should always be credited for your work and it should never be used without your permission.

Tips and Advice from Professionals



Michael Famighetti
Editor, Aperture Magazine
New York City, USA

“I’m looking for a clear expression of an idea; I ask why is the photographer asking me to look at this? When reviewing hundreds of submissions, exceptional, well-executed work that animates an idea and is visually exciting really stands out and deserves to be recognized.”



James Estrin
Co-Editor,
New York Times Lens Blog
New York City, USA

“Entering contests can be a good way to promote yourself, but it does not necessarily make for great photography. If you win, that’s wonderful. If not, don’t worry. Anyone who has ever judged a photography contest can tell you that it is not a scientific process. It is subjective. Different judges will give you different results. That said, when I judge a contest I look for photographs that make me feel something. Anything. I also look for stories that are original.”



Patricia Lanza
Director of Talent &
Content, The Annenberg
Space for Photography Los
Angeles, CA, USA

“Does the image tell the story or illustrate the photographer’s vision clearly? The difference between a good photograph and a great one can be subtle, but a great photograph evokes an emotion/connection in the viewer. — they should submit images that show their own vision, what is true to them.”



Sarah Leen
Director of Photography,
National Geographic
Washington, DC, USA

“I look for images that move me, that are not derivative of other work that I have seen and that show the photographer has their own ‘visual voice’ and point of view. I love photographers who can show me familiar things in new ways and whose sense of the art of the photograph is as strong as the journalism and the message.”

Nick's Tips

- Research the type of photographs the juror(s) have made or selected in the past
- Read their previous Juror Statements
- Research the Theme (or genre) to broaden your range of understanding.
- Make sure you're your entries are technically perfect. No smudches, no sensor dirt, sharp, etc. Atnip and I have judged many County and State competitions and ties are broken on technicalities.



Don't make these mistakes

(I've read that 30-35% of all entries are disqualified because of carelessness)

1. Read the Rules Thoroughly Prior to Submitting Your Work
2. Be Aware of the Competition's Deadline
3. Thoroughly Understand the Competition's Theme & Allowed Media
4. Apply Only to Competitions That Truly Fit Your Art
5. Follow the Rules and Event Prospectus Instructions
6. Label the Entries in Their Format, Not Yours
7. Follow the Organization's Sizing Requirements
8. Provide Good Quality Images
9. Provide a Biography If They Ask For It
10. Provide and Enter the Maximum Amount of Entries Allowed
11. Do Not Exceed What is Asked for or Required for the Competition



OOPS!

Notable Competitions to Consider

- **Critical Mass**



- PhotoLucida
The aim of Critical Mass is to provide participants with career-building opportunities and to promote emerging and mid-career artists. Critical Mass is about exposure, connection, and community. Awards include a monograph publication, an artist residency, a solo exhibition, and an international group exhibition. **200+ jurors.**

- **Aperture Portfolio Prize** 

- Aperture Foundation
Aperture, a not-for-profit foundation, connects the photo community and its audiences in print, in person, and online. The purpose of the Aperture Portfolio Prize is to identify trends in contemporary photography and highlight artists whose work deserves greater recognition.

- **CENTER Choice Awards** 

- CENTER
The Choice Awards recognize outstanding photographers working in all processes and subject matter. The Awards are divided into three categories: Curator's Choice, Editor's Choice, and Gallerist's Choice. The winners receive recognition via exhibition, publication, portfolio reviews and more.

- **THE Art OF Photography SHOW**

- The Art of Photography Show is an established and critical force in the world of contemporary photography. This well thought out exhibition provides value to artists at every turn, from first-rate viewing in the judging process to publication opportunities, well-attended events and lectures, photo industry connections and monetary awards.

- **PDN PHOTO ANNUAL**

- PhotoDistrict News
Hosted by PDN, Photo Annual is one of the largest competitions in photography offering top exposure to some of the biggest names in the business. They give out several awards in several categories, changing from year to year.

- **Prix de la Photographie**



- The Prix de la Photographie, Paris (Px3) is one of Europe's most prestigious photography competitions. Since 2006, Px3 has promoted an acute appreciation of photography, discovered hundreds of emerging talents as well as awarded professional photographers. Px3 each year introduces photographers from around the globe to the artistic community of Paris. Prizes are €3,000 and €1,500, an exhibition in Paris, and publication in our Annual Book of Photography.

Resources

- The Business of Photography
 - Mary Virginia Swanson
- Lensculture.com
 - How to get the most out of Photography Competitions

