



The 2020 Photographer's Guide to Photo Contests

an educational guide by:



WORLD
PHOTOGRAPHY
ORGANISATION

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Sony World Photography Awards



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2020

2020 DEADLINES

Professional

January 14, 2020 at 13:00 (GMT)

Open

January 7, 2020 at 13:00 (GMT)

2021 Awards

Open June 1, 2020

PRIZES

- Range of Sony digital imaging kit
- \$60,000 shared between the winners with Photographer of the Year awarded \$25,000
- International exposure
- Publication in annual Sony World Photography Awards catalogue
- Included in major show at Somerset House and traveling exhibition
- Opportunity to sell your images through The Print Shop

ENTER FOR FREE

worldphoto.org/swpa

PART I

Intro

If you're feeling cynical about the photo contest landscape and culture, you're not alone. Since we started publishing the PhotoShelter Guide to Photo Contests in 2013, we've seen questionable contests sprout from every corner of the internet, while venerable contests have gone the way of the dodo due to both internal and external forces. Photographers – especially full-time, professional photographers – have every right to a healthy dose of skepticism about the contest industry.

Still, when we evaluate the types of marketing activities that photographers should conduct as part of their overall plan, we still recommend entering established contests with solid track records. Well-oiled PR machines can still generate millions of eyeballs and a number of contests offer prize money in the thousands of dollars. Winning a prestigious contest still carries weight on a CV and gives you a reason to market to your clients and potential customers.

Over the years, we've evaluated dozens of contests, spoken to winners and made some recommendations from the list. Last year, we departed from our formula of providing a grade or rating to contests, and instead only listed contests that we believe were worth your consideration. We continue with that approach this year be-

cause although the number of contests continues to multiply, very few have any economic or marketing value.

Our picks are skewed towards larger prizes, in part, because most of the winners we've talked to in the past didn't see a material increase in print sales or job offers. Press exposure can yield increased name recognition – particularly when a photographer wins several competitions in a year – but for most photographers, nothing beats cold, hard cash. That said, there are a number of niche and/or regional contests that might be a great fit, so make sure to do your own research.

Our methodology continues to be driven by four main criteria: 1) entry fees, 2) prizes, 3) submission rights, and, to a lesser degree, 4) promised exposure. We intentionally excluded contests that are structured as grants ([check out other grant guide](#)).

Entry Fees

Entry fees are sometimes used as a way for potentially unscrupulous contests to generate revenue. Many great contests have no entry fee. That said, entry fees can provide a way for contests to compensate judges, fund prizes and exhibitions, weed out unserious entrants, and pay for operating costs when a deep-pocketed sponsor isn't available.

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Some contests offer “early bird” discounts as well as marked-up “late entry” options. Since most contests typically set their deadlines around the same time each year, you can save yourself some cash by entering early.

Consider the entry fee to grand prize ratio, and pick the contests with the larger ratio. For example, the Kuala Lumpur International Photo Award offers a \$5,000 prize with a \$15 entry fee (333:1). By contrast, the GDT European Wildlife Photographer of the Year charges €30 and offers a top prize of €3,000 (100:1). Of course, contests can offer many more prizes and perks, but this single ratio can be an effective evaluation tool. And exercise caution with any contest that charges more than about \$25/entry.

Prizes

Contests should offer cash and/or equipment prizes that are in line with the size of the contest and audience. Premier contests attract premier sponsors which usually lead to better prizes. We value contests that have multiple prizes for different categories or top finishers. We abhor contests that have entry fees, while only awarding certificates to the winners. These types of contests exist to line the pockets of the promoters and should be avoided.

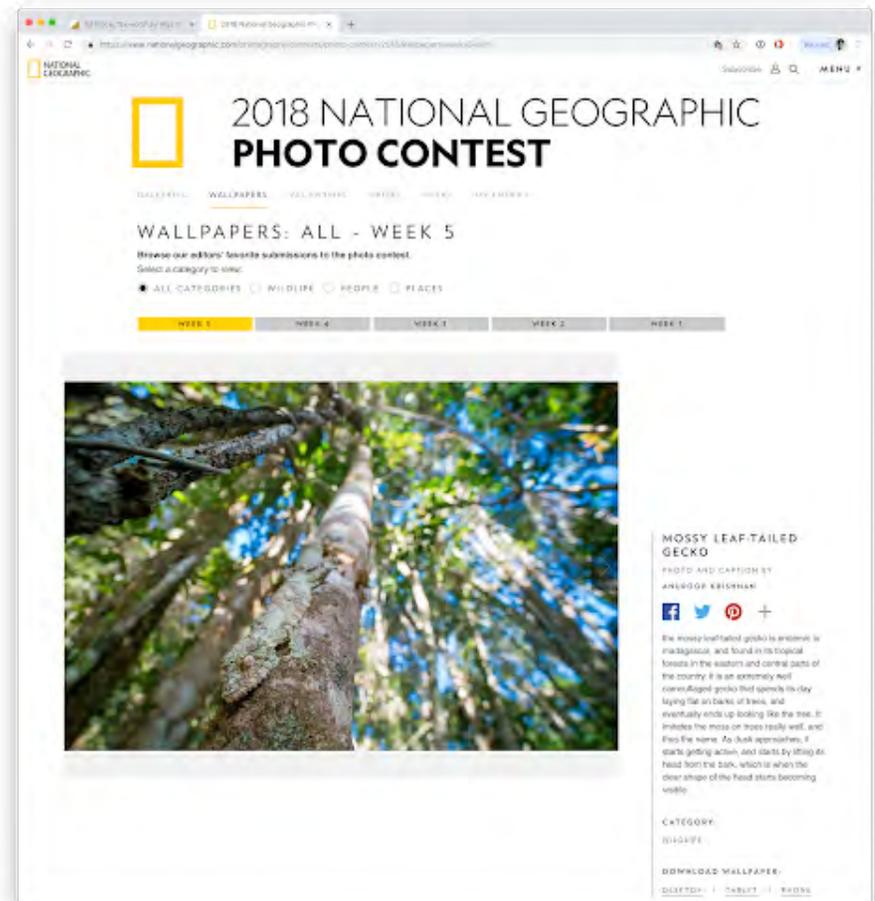
Some niche contests don’t offer as rich a prize package as the larger contests. But if they are well-regarded and maintain a cachet within the niche, we believe they can still be valuable for the photographer.

Just remember that you’re on the hook for taxes (at least in the U.S.) – even if the prize is gear or an exotic cruise to the Galapagos.

Submission rights

Good contests have limited rights-grabbing language, and only use images in conjunction with promotion of the contest while including appropriate photo credits. The best contests restrict their use of images to a fixed duration. All contests will ask for broad rights to reproduce images in mul-

tle media (e.g. print, exhibitions, online, in-app, etc), and more competitions are asking for display rights to all entries, not just the winners (some contests like the Audubon allow entrants to opt-out of this type of usage). This approach allows contests to build a slow and steady stream of content throughout the course of the application and judging periods.



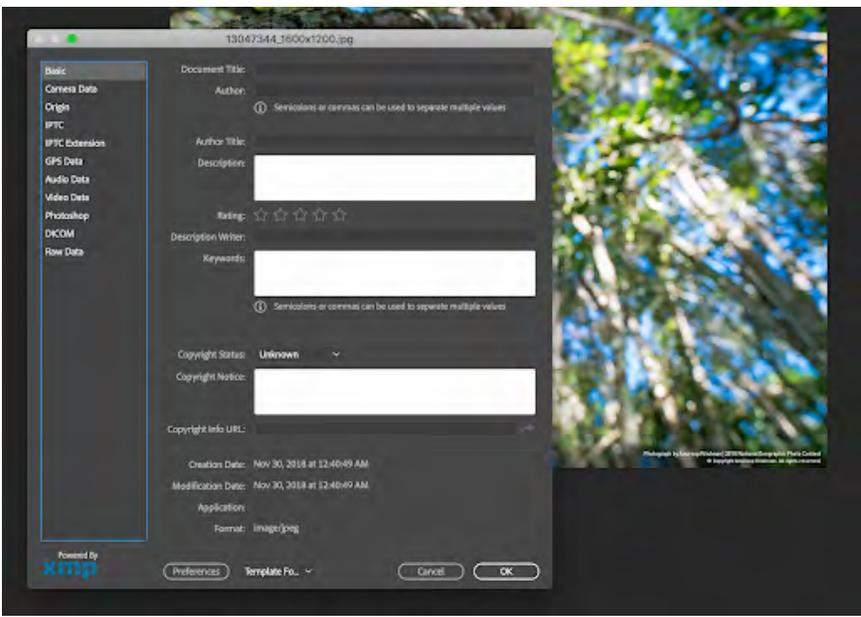


Of course, the more an image is displayed online, the greater the chances it will be stolen. The approach to showing curated entries is becoming more of a norm – particularly in contests geared more towards non-professionals. Contests like the National Geographic Photo Contest also allow downloads of popular images as wallpaper which includes a visible copyright notice, but the file does not include embedded metadata.

The terms and conditions of each contest can vary significantly with some featuring language that is downright hostile to intellectual property creators like photographers.

The **Smithsonian Photo Contest** (we bolded egregious sections) is an example of unfriendly language. We don't like these terms because it allows Smithsonian to use your image on materials that have nothing to do with the competition (e.g. calendars, books, subscription cards, etc).

“You retain your rights to your photograph; however, by entering the contest, you grant the Smithsonian Institution (and those authorized by the Smithsonian) a royalty-free, world-wide, **perpetual**, non-exclusive license to publicly display, distribute, reproduce and create derivative works of the entries, in whole or in part, in any media now existing or later developed, for any Smithsonian Institution purpose, including, but not limited to, **advertising and promotion of the magazine and its website**, exhibition, and commercial products, including but not limited to Smithsonian Institution publications. Any photograph reproduced will include a photographer credit as feasible. The Smithsonian Institution will not be required to pay any additional consideration or seek any additional approval in connection with such uses.”



The **Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year** contest has a great set of terms and conditions that restricts both usage and duration of submitted photos with a high degree of specificity:

30) Any winning or shortlisted Entry may be used by the Organiser or AG (and any person authorised to do so by either of them) solely for the purpose of marketing and promoting the Competition and the Exhibition or future Competitions and Exhibitions, including for the purpose of:

- a) judging the Competition;
- b) displaying the Entries on the Competition's website, AG's website and websites of partners;
- c) displaying the Entries at the Exhibition;
- d) displaying the Entries in a book, diary, calendar or magazine or similar published work (whether print or digital);
- e) publishing the Entries on posters, banners or similar to promote the Competition or the Exhibition...

...without further remuneration or reference to the participant. Creative control over the use of the Entry in any feature, including features produced for the purposes set out above, will remain with the Organiser or AG at all times.

31) Each Entrant grants the Organiser and AG a non-exclusive, irrevocable licence in each Entry throughout the world in all media for the uses described in Rule 30) for 2 years following the date of announcement of the winners on 15 August 2019.

In general, photographer-friendly terms will restrict the usage of your image in connection with marketing the contest only, and require the use of said image for a fixed period of time (2-3 years is ideal).

Promised exposure

In addition to cash and equipment prizes, exposure through the media or exhibitions can help to increase a photographer's name recognition. Shows like the Sony World Photography Awards at the Somerset House in London,

the Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize at the UK's National Portrait Gallery, or World Press Photo's traveling exhibition have become increasingly renown, and bring tens of thousands of eyeballs to the winners.

Well-run contests utilize PR agencies to generate significant press coverage of the winners. Googling a contest name in the past year and looking under the "News" tab is an easy way to evaluate whether contest organizers expended even a modicum of effort (and expense) to generate more exposure. In 2019, the Audubon's PR team generated press coverage for the Photo Awards winners on the [BBC](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Mashable](#), [My Modern Met](#), [People](#), [PetaPixel](#), [The Atlantic](#), [The Guardian](#), [Gizmodo](#), [GEO Online](#), [Washington Post](#), [Telegraph](#), [Forbes](#), [FOX News](#), [NY Post](#) and many more. You simply do not find this wide a coverage from poorly organized contests that believe a winners list on their website equates to PR.

But even broad exposure rarely leads to new work or print sales. Winning contests can bring networking opportunities, but contest winners still have to hustle to close deals and convince buyers to open up their pocketbooks.

A number of photographers have told us that they are more interested in exposure that well-known contests bring them – both in terms of general PR as well as being seen by an influential jury. All the more reason to do your research before entering.

Manipulation, Ethics and RAW Files

Although there are many artistic-style contests that are free from the shackles of anti-manipulation constraints, many contests have prohibitions against certain types of post-production (including HDR, panoramic stitching, compositing, photo illustration, etc). Nature, wildlife, travel and photojournalism contests more often than not require submission of a RAW file during the final round of judging to proactively detect disallowed manipulation – and photographers who "only shoot JPEG" can anticipate even more scrutiny.

Additionally, some contests are employing stronger language around the [ethics of image capture](#), and might require a description of how an image was made to ensure that people or wildlife weren't [unethically harmed](#) while taking a photo.

Lastly, some contests have started to require a model release for any identifiable people within a photo. This somewhat onerous requirement is likely designed to satisfy "right to privacy" laws that can vary significantly by jurisdiction.

What to know about contest judging and juries

If you're looking for uniformity and transparency in contest judging, you'll be sorely disappointed. There are no standards within the industry, and furthermore, many contests have very little formal documentation to ensure consistency in process from year to year.

Contest organizers largely use opaque judging processes, and a few contests either fail to list the jury, or are suspected of using a sham jury to pick a winner. Some contests require judges to review every single entry, while others employ a pre-selection board (e.g. [Bird in Flight Prize](#)) or single gatekeeper to whittle down the entries before a final selection.

Some contests compensate judges – a good sign as far as we're concerned because it ensures that contest promoters value the judges' time and expertise – and a legitimate reason for higher entry fees.

Contests have been accused of [falsely listing](#) "celebrity" judges without actually engaging them. And sometimes judges sign on board without fully understanding a contest's onerous terms and conditions. In other words, exercise caution when evaluating the legitimacy of an unknown contest by its jury list.

This year we've included a gender and POC (person-of-color) breakdown of the juries because we believe that [experience shapes the perception of photos](#) and the reality that they depict. The categorizations are inevitably flawed (we used a binary gender classification and relied on photos and names to determine whether a judge was a POC), but we believe the categorization has value as a directional tool.

Disclaimer

We strive to publish accurate details on jury composition, contest prizes and deadlines. However, in some cases, we were unable to verify 2020 contest information and therefore relied on information from past years.

PART II

About the World Photography Organisation and the Sony World Photography Awards

For this guide we've partnered up with one of the most prestigious awards photographers can be honored with, the World Photography Organisation's Sony World Photography Awards. We spoke to them about the awards and how they've been helping both professional and emerging photographers since 2008.

Sony World Photography Awards

The Sony World Photography Awards are open to all and free to enter. Created by the World Photography Organisation and sponsored by Sony, the Awards has four competitions: Professional, Open, Youth and Student.

There's a wide range of categories for photographers to choose, from Architecture to Landscape, Natural World & Wildlife to Portraiture, Travel to Street Photography, the competitions welcome entries celebrating the beauty and diversity of photography today.

A total prize fund of \$60,000 plus the latest Sony digital equipment is shared between the winning photographers. Past successful photographers have benefitted from publishing deals, gallery representation and worldwide exhibitions.

How to enter

If you have an engaging series that tells a story, enter the **Professional competition**.

Deadline: January 14, 2020 at 13.00 (GMT)

If you have a striking standalone image enter the **Open competition**.

Deadline: January 7, 2020 at 13.00 (GMT)

Don't forget! Once you enter the Professional competition you cannot submit work to the Open competition (and vice versa).

If you know any budding photographers (aged 12 to 19 years old) or students enrolled in a photography program, make sure you tell them about the **Youth and Student competitions**.

Enter for free at:

worldphoto.org/sony-world-photography-awards

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ORGANISATION**

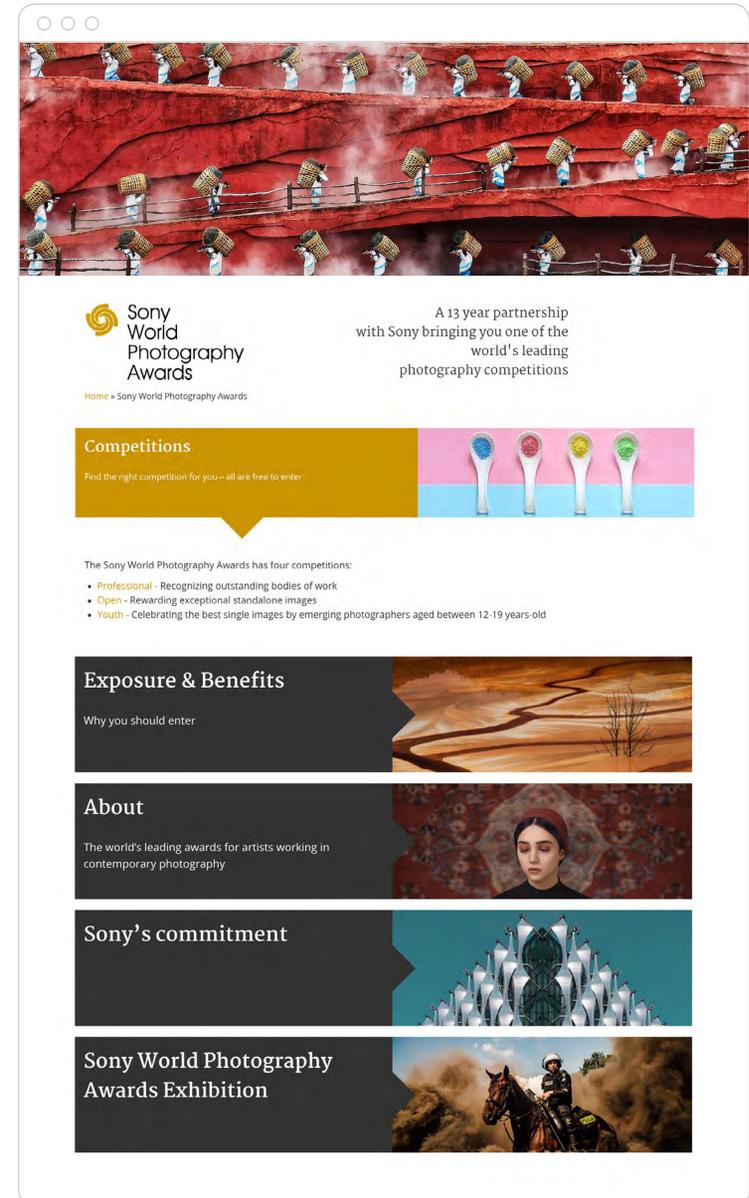
Why enter?

Excelling in the Sony World Photography Awards can make a real difference in developing a photographer's career. The Awards support passion projects of the professional photographer, so submit your personal work and gain exposure for your distinctive way of capturing the world.

“ Three big things have happened since I won the Photographer of the Year title in 2018. I've recently had a book released (Ex-Voto, published by GOST), received gallery representation (by HackelBury Fine Art) and I'm also having a show at The Rencontres d'Arles.

The Sony World Photography Awards has really helped to change my career trajectory, which is now much more in the fine art photography world. The Awards has accelerated that process to get where I hoped to be.”

– Alys Tomlinson, 2018 Photographer of the Year



FEATURE

A Word from World Photography Organisation's Founder and CEO Scott Gray

The World Photography Organisation is a global platform to honour, present and share the best contemporary photography from around the world. Working across 195 countries and territories, we promote conversations around photography and facilitate the meeting of creative minds so innovative and exciting imagery is celebrated.

We're driven to push photography forward and one way we deliver this is through the Sony World Photography Awards, a program which hopes to give a platform to established photographers by supporting their individual vision and passion projects. The Awards is also committed to finding undiscovered talent.

Every year, thousands of photographers trust the Organisation by submitting their strongest work to the Awards. With hundreds of thousands of people across the planet viewing the work online, past successful photographers have benefitted from publishing deals, gallery representation and worldwide exhibitions.

Since the Awards started 13 years ago, we've highlighted some of the most exciting photographers working in the industry just before they step centre stage. Take great British contemporary photographer Vanessa Winship, awarded Photog-

rapher of the Year in 2008, or Portuguese photographer Edgar Martins with his conceptual, inquisitive works recognised numerous times throughout the Awards history. The compelling work of American photojournalist John Moore was celebrated in 2015 and one of the most recent Photographer of the Year recipients, Alys Tomlinson, has enjoyed global notice, including winning the Louis Roederer Discovery Award at Les Rencontres d'Arles.

The Awards has cemented its legacy thanks to its inclusive nature and supporting photographers' passion to create individual and imaginative work. Embracing all genres, styles and points of view, we encourage you to enter the Sony World Photography Awards so we can celebrate those talented, dedicated and creative photographers of today.



Scott Gray
Founder and CEO,
World Photography
Organisation

FEATURE

2020 Sony World Photography Awards: The Judges

The prestige of the Sony World Photography Awards is reinforced by our judging panel and the vigorous judgment process of each competition. At the World Photography Organisation we aim to invite the leading voices in the photography industry to connect and enrich the creative community, so together great photographic work can be created. We seek out a balanced judging panel for each competition, with a mixture of the world's most credible curators, museum directors and picture editors from the finest publications and institutions.

Here we outline each judge's experience and expertise in photography to highlight why they joined the panel for the 2020 Sony World Photography Awards. The individuals making up the 2020 judging panel are truly international and bring an exciting range of knowledge from wide and varied backgrounds in the medium.

The jurors will meet in London in January 2020 to debate the work. All work is judged anonymously.

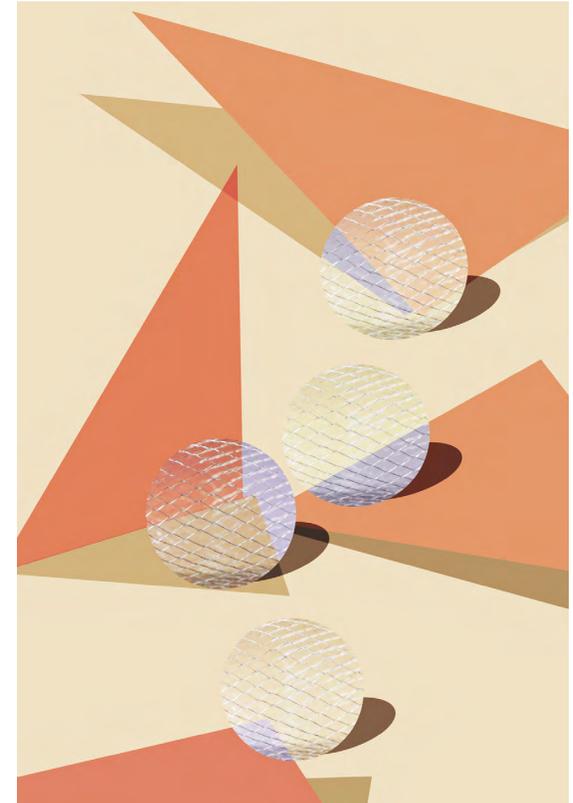


Photo by **KuicSu**, 2019 Sony World Photography Awards.

2020 JUDGES: PROFESSIONAL COMPETITION



Chair Mike Trow

Editor, Photographer, Consultant (UK)

Mike has more than 25 years in the photography industry. He was Picture Editor at British Vogue for 13 years where he led a team that commissioned, produced and art directed all portrait and feature shoots. Now predominantly a curator, consultant and editor, Mike has chaired the judging panel for the Sony World Photography Awards for three years. Mike also curated the 2019 Sony World Photography Awards Exhibition at Somerset House.



Claudi Carreras Guillén

Independent Curator,
Editor, And Cultural Manager (Spain)

Claudi joins the 2019 judging panel having curated numerous solo and collective photography exhibitions shown in more than 50 countries. His expertise are in Latin American photography and the photobook.



Katie Hollander

Director, Annenberg Space
for Photography (USA)

Katie has extensive experience in arts and culture management and programming. With a strong background in non-profit organisations - such as Creative Time and Art Table, Katie joined the Annenberg team in 2017. The Annenberg Space for Photography is one of Los Angeles' leading venues for thought-provoking photo-based exhibitions.



Touria El Glaoui
Founding Director, 1-54
Contemporary African Art Fair (UK)

Initiating the 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair in London in 2013, Touria brings together some of the most prestigious galleries from around the world to celebrate African art and photography.



Gwen Lee
Director, Singapore International
Photography Festival (Singapore)

Launching the biennale photography festival back in 2008, Gwen was recognized for her contribution to the arts community in 2010 by the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Trade. She has curated more than 60 international photography exhibitions.



Brent Lewis
Photo Editor, The New York Times
& Co-Founder, Diversify Photo (USA)

Alongside his busy day job as a photo editor for one of the most prestigious newspapers in the world, Brent is the co-founder of Diversify Photo, a website of 300+ talented photographers of color from across the globe.

OPEN AND YOUTH COMPETITIONS



Gisela Kayser

Managing Director & Artistic Director, Freundeskreis Willy-Brandt-Haus (Germany)

Gisela Kayser has been the Artistic Director of Freundeskreis Willy-Brandt-Haus since 1996 and is responsible for the institution's cultural program. In 2011, she was appointed Managing Director of Freundeskreis Willy-Brandt-Haus. For 23 years Kayser and her team have put together 10-12 exhibitions each year at the Willy-Brandt-Haus, focusing on photography and socially engaged topics.

NATIONAL AWARDS & STUDENT COMPETITION



Tim Clark

Curator, Writer And Editor-In-Chief, 1000 Words (UK)

Since 2008 Tim has been the Editor-in-Chief and Director of photography focused magazine 1000 Words. He's also served as Associate Curator at Media Space, The Science Museum, London; Curator of Photo50, London Art Fair 2019; and Guest Curator of FORMAT International Photography Festival 2019. Tim's curated numerous solo exhibitions of artists including Alec Soth, Julia Margaret Cameron, Martin Parr, Mariken Wessels and Edgar Martins.

Discover more about the 2020 judges at worldphoto.org

FEATURE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

2019 Sony World Photography Awards Photographer of the Year Winner Federico Borella

The World Photography Organisation and Sony pay tribute to photographers striving for excellence with the prestigious Photographer of the Year award. The Photographer of the Year title helps establish and celebrate the finest photographer of our time.

On April 17, 2019, Italian photojournalist Federico Borella was announced the [2019 Photographer of the Year](#). Borella received \$25,000 (USD) and a range of Sony digital imaging equipment. Photography has the power to shape our understanding of the earth we inhabit and the World Photography Organisation hopes its support will help promote Borella's environmentally led series Five Degrees to a wider audience.

We caught up with Federico to discover what he's learned about his photographic practice during his experience with the Sony World Photography Awards and the World Photography Organisation.

A big congratulations Federico on being awarded the 2019 Sony World Photography Awards Photographer of the Year title. Can you share with us what this particular award means to you?

Winning Photographer of the Year makes me so happy because it means my story can reach so many people. My phone started ringing straight after the Awards night and it hasn't really stopped ringing since! I've got messages from all around the world... People want to listen to the story I want to tell. This award helps me to be recognised as a documentary photographer, which is super important. How can I ask for more?

The origin to your winning series Five Degrees is intriguing, can you share how this project came about?

Five Degrees started in January 2018 when I was looking for a story related to climate change in India. I started searching online and found this interesting study by a PhD student from the University of California, Berkeley, which puts India's rising temperatures in relation to the increase of suicides amongst the country's farmers. I started my project in Tamil Nadu, a state facing the worst drought in 140 years. The temperatures were so high when I was working there. Those farmers have to carry out intensive labour, working the field all day long, in that heat. In the Maharashtra state there are almost 10 suicides per day.

We meet citizens who've been exposed to the tragic hardships of global warming and their vulnerability is hard to process. When meeting these people and hearing their stories it must have been difficult not to get emotionally involved?

When I started this project I felt it must be so incredibly hard to live in a land so unproductive and uninhabitable because of the environmental and political hardships the farmers and their families have to endure. It wasn't difficult to take pictures because these people wanted to tell their stories. I did find it hard to not get emotionally involved, yet as a photojournalist I have a duty to be the subjects' voices and share what they want to say to as many people as possible.

Five Degrees is an interesting edit: you mix still life, portraiture and landscape images to create a powerful story. Can you tell us more about your creative decisions while editing this series?

I spent three months before my trip thinking about how can I put this story into visual form. I studied classical literature at university which helped me weave a narrative into the series. My intention was to show the absence of the dead without using dramatic, hard-hitting pictures. I felt a square format and mostly still life would work best. This is a delicate topic, which needs to be dealt with sensitively, so I abandoned the traditional, more direct, photojournalist approach. I feel this angle is shown well in the photograph of the shovel, which achieves this by showing the absence of the owner.

What is the goal with Five Degrees and how do you think the Sony World Photography Awards will help facilitate in achieving that goal?

My goal is to create a much larger body of work looking at climate change in India. The first chapter (Five Degrees) is regarding the past and the next chapter should be about the present. The chapter after that should be, of course, about the future. Five Degrees is about the absence, the loss, so the next chapter might well be about hope and how India and the rest of the world is modifying

its behaviour for cleaner energy. The Sony World Photography Awards can give me the global exposure this project needs.

Do you see yourself more as a reporter than a photographer?

This is a good question! I see myself more as a reporter because I like to be the voice and eyes of the people who do not have the same platform to communicate their stories to the rest of the world.



Photo by Federico Borella, Photographer of the Year 2019.



Photo by Federico Borella, Photographer of the Year 2019.

Your series was seen by thousands of visitors when on show at Somerset House and will continue to be seen by more people, all of whom are sure to be moved by your story. What advice would you give them if they hope to make a difference to global warming?

I hope this project will act as a reminder. We can get wrapped up in our everyday routines: when it's cold in winter we heat our homes or when we're running late we drive our cars rather than cycle. I hope the work helps us remember on the other side of the world someone is suffering because of climate change.

Has there been anything that you've found particularly interesting about the Sony World Photography Awards Exhibition?

Somerset House is the most beautiful place to be exhibited – it really is an amazing venue. In terms of the exhibition every single series is printed and framed with a lot of attention to detail, the curator has done a wonderful job. In my pictures, for example, I have a light wooden frame, which complements the wood seen in the landscape I am photographing. It helps to add a lot to the story I am telling.

For the 2020 Sony World Photography Awards the Professional competition introduces an Environment category to challenge artists to address environmental concerns affecting the world today. There are 10 categories for photographers to choose from, including Architecture, Creative, Documentary and Landscape.

Discover more at worldphoto.org

PART III

HOW TO CREATE THAT WINNING IMAGE:

7 Top Tips When Entering Photography Competitions

Many photographers set out with one goal in mind: having their work acknowledged and celebrated in photography competitions. So what does it take to make your image or body of work stand out from those thousands of other entries? The World Photography Organisation and Mike Trow, the 2020 Sony World Photography Awards Professional competition judging chair, provide top tips and insights into succeeding in photography competitions. We hear from some of the 2019 Professional category winners, too.

1. BE AT THE TOP OF YOUR GAME

There are so many good photographs created today that high-quality images were the norm for the judges during the selection process. "The imagery celebrated in last year's Sony World Photography Awards was remarkable in its diversity, artistic integrity, and technical quality," says Mike Trow. "For the 2020 competitions, I want to ensure the Awards continue on this upward trajectory and acknowledge those individuals using photography to interrogate the world as it is today." The images that made it into the 2019 shortlists were those that had that little bit extra. The photographers who strived for excellence in their imagery went further.

2. EMBRACE A FRESH POINT OF VIEW

Images highly derivative in style often fall at the first hurdle. A photograph might tell a familiar story or depict a subject seen time and again, but it can be incredibly exciting if the photographer approached it from a more distinctive point of view. "Last year's Photographer of the Year Federico Borella captured a global environmental story in such a way that he pushed the boundaries of documentary photography to explore new ground. I want to be excited by work that is dynamic, challenging and brave in its approach."

The World Photography Organisation encourages new, innovative work.

3. CREATE A CONNECTION

Mike Trow tells us: "I hope to uncover and honor photographers fighting for the sophisticated language of imagery, to celebrate those creating work that invites the viewer to stop, engage with and be compelled to discover more about what they are looking at." Art that's endured is normally the piece which speaks to the viewer. Images that communicate an idea or emotion in a clear and effective way went far in the 2019 Awards. Now in its 13th year, Sony World Photography Awards has cemented its

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legacy thanks to its inclusive nature and supporting photographers' passion to create individual and imaginative work. Be brave with your submission and enter your passion projects.

4. KEEP NARRATIVE FRONT OF MIND

With 327,000 images entered into last year's awards, superficial photographs aren't going to last long in the judging process. The judges were excited by the entries telling captivating stories about humanity and the contemporary world. Jasper Doest, winner of the 2019 Natural World & Wildlife category, gives his advice on storytelling in photography: "During the editing process you need to stay as close to your story as possible. You need to know which are the key pieces to the puzzle, those that are most relevant to tell the story." When the judges are looking at such a huge amount of work, they don't want to see the same approach again and again. Work needs to stand out visually – as well as in its content. Jasper continues: "It's important that every theme is a surprise, that narrative has a positive twist on the conventional approach. Often the smaller the set of pictures, the better. Start with fewer images and only when a piece of the puzzle is missing, add another piece."

5. KNOW THE RULES INSIDE OUT

It's an obvious one but the most important point to remember: read the rules and then read them again. Great entries can be disqualified because they don't adhere to the rules and guidelines. All rules can be found on the World Photography Organisation website. To be inclusive in every sense is at the core of the Organisation's makeup so we aim to make the Sony World Photography Awards as straight-forward as possible to enter.

6. MAKE SURE YOUR CATEGORY IS RIGHT

Give some serious thought to what category you choose! Don't expect the other judges to move your submission into a more fitting category.

7. CONSIDER THE OUTPUT

The shortlisted entries to the Sony World Photography Awards have to work on a variety of platforms. While most of the images are viewed digitally through the World Photography Organisation website and social media channels, the final presentation of the works in the exhibition and book form is key. Photographs that had the potential to retain power when taken off a backlit screen and work as prints went far.

“ I want to feel that all the images recognized in this 2020 Awards have been made with a rigorous mental and emotional process that can be communicated from the artist to the viewer through their work.”

– Mike Trow

Listen to the World Photography Organisation's new podcast [The Bigger Picture](#). In their first episode Scott Gray talks to Mike Trow.

PART IV:

28 Photo Contests Worth Considering

*Contests organized by niche category

Wildlife/Nature

Audubon Photography Awards

Since its founding in 1905, the National Audubon Society has promoted a message of conservation through science, education, and advocacy. So it's not surprising that Audubon recognizes the power of photography in elevating the natural world in our collective conscience. Although the Awards are limited to residents of the US and Canada, the winners receive worldwide exposure, and the contest has served as a springboard for past winners. Wildlife photographer and judge Melissa Groo helped the contest draft rules around [ethical bird photography](#), which means winning goes beyond just a pretty picture.

DEADLINE

April 6, 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

July 2020

ENTRY FEES

\$15-\$20

for single image

2019 JURY

33% women & 16% POC

PRIZES

\$5,000

Grand Prize

\$2,500 Professional Prize

\$2,500 Amateur Prize

Audubon's Hog Island Photography

Camp Youth Prize

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Published in Audubon magazine, Nature's Best Photography magazine, and exhibited at the Wonders Of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium in Springfield, MO.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

Although the winners will no longer be featured in the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Audubon's PR team worked in overdrive to gain significant press coverage for the 2019 winners. The contest's commitment to ethical bird photography combined with a solid cash prize make this a no-brainer for even the bird-brained.



Photo by Kathrin Swoboda / Audubon Grand Prize

Disclosure: PhotoShelter co-founder Allen Murabayashi serves as a judge for the contest.

Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year

Businessman Dick Smith founded Australian Geographic (no relation to National Geographic) in 1986, and the ownership has changed hands many times since with the contest coming to life in 2009. Contest entries are limited to photos taken in the ANZANG bioregion comprised of Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica and New Guinea, but there is no restriction on the nationality of the entrants. In 2019, the contest offered nine different categories including a junior division for entrants under 18 years of age.

DEADLINE

January 24, 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

August 2020

ENTRY FEES

A\$38

(includes GST) for the first image & **A\$22**
(includes GST) for each subsequent image.

A\$10

For Junior Photography

(includes GST) for the first image & **A\$5**
(includes GST) for each subsequent image.

2019 JURY

33% women & 0% POC

PRIZES

A\$10,000

Grand Prize and an expedition cruise to Papua New Guinea or the Spice Islands with Coral Expeditions for the winner and a travel companion.

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Inclusion in photobook and exhibition at the South Australian Museum, in addition to a museum based in Sydney. (This year it was the Powerhouse museum, but previously it has been the Australian Museum). Images are displayed on both South Australian Museum and Australian Geographic websites and social media accounts, and in a calendar and diary for the following year.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

For a country with a relatively small population, Australia certainly knows how to celebrate and reward photography. Australian Geographic's regional focus give the winner's circle a unique feel, and we love the pro-photographer terms and conditions which restrict both the duration and use of entries.



Photo by Mat Beetson

AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHIC
NATURE ———
PHOTOGRAPHER
OF THE YEAR —

AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND ANTARCTICA NEW GUINEA

BigPicture Natural World Photography Competition

The California Academy of Sciences created the contest six years ago to “celebrate and illustrate the rich diversity of life on earth and inspire action to protect and conserve it through the power of imagery.” Entrants must categorize their images into one of seven categories and provide a caption that includes specific location info.

DEADLINE

March 1, 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

May 2020

ENTRY FEES

\$25

up to 10 photos for all categories

\$15

for 1 Photo Story (4–6 images)

2019 JURY

57% women & 0% POC

PRIZES

\$5,000

Grand Prize

\$1,000 prizes in seven categories

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Feature on the BigPicture website, social media accounts and in the BigPicture [Exhibit](#) on display at the California Academy of Sciences from July 31–October 25, 2020.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

Within a relatively short period, the BigPicture Competition has cemented itself as a formidable force within the nature and wildlife photo contest landscape. The 2019 winners gallery had a very distinct look-and-feel that set it apart editorially from other contests in this category. Although the T&C restricts the use of the images in promotion of the contest, we wish the contest organizers didn't insist on a license in perpetuity.



Photo by Tanya Houppermans

Wildlife Photographer of the Year

The UK Natural History Museum sponsors the annual Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition in both an adult and youth (17 and under) variant to promote the discovery and understanding of the natural world through photography. Although many contests focus on the natural world, few have as rich a prize and the prestige and press to go with it. A single £30 entry fee allows entrants to submit up to twenty-five images in a range of categories.

DEADLINE

December 12, 2019

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

October 2020

ENTRY FEES

£30.00

per entrant

2019 JURY

44% women, 0% POC

PRIZES

£10,000

Overall winner

£1,000 Young overall winner

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition at London's Natural History Museum followed by a global tour with significant press coverage.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

The six cash prizes ranging from £1,000 to £10,000 would be enough to warrant our recommendation. Throw in a trip to the awards ceremony combined with the contest's reputation and guaranteed exposure make this a no-brainer. This is one of the most widely respected contests in photography, and we like their solid position on ethical photography which includes language on the use of drones and baiting of animals.



Photo by Skye Meaker, Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2018

“ I always say that ...it is the Mount Everest of wildlife photography.”

– Skye Meaker, Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year (2018)

Photojournalism/Documentary

Pictures of the Year International

Pictures of the Year International (POYi) is one of the oldest and most prestigious photojournalism programs in the world, and is managed by the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute at the Missouri School of Journalism. The organization is a non-profit dedicated to promoting documentary photographers and freelance photojournalists, and the competition celebrates great work from photojournalists worldwide. The contest has used [Facebook Live](#) to stream portions of the judging process, providing a rare and transparent (and sometimes controversial) way for photographers to understand the machinations of contest judging.

DEADLINE

January 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

March 2020

ENTRY FEES

\$50

per entry

2019 JURY

63% women, 44% POC

PRIZES

\$1,000

& Tiffany crystal trophy for Photographer of the Year, Newspaper Photographer of the year, World Understanding Award, Community Awareness Award, and Environmental Vision Award.

Tiffany crystal trophy for Multimedia Photographer of the Year, Sports Photographer of the Year, Newspaper Visual Editor of the Year, Magazine /Media Photographer of the Year, Documentary Project of the Year, and Best Photography Book.

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Multiple exhibitions including the Newseum in Washington, D.C.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

You can't fake longevity and a storied history. As a number of photojournalism contests move towards questionable ethical territory, POYi remains almost a quaint anachronism. There are certainly richer prizes, but not many photojournalism awards have the legacy and cachet that POYi offers. The judging discussion offers a fascinating look behind the curtain about process, procedure and the subjective nature of criticism.



Photo by Fabio Bucciarelli, Photographer of the Year 2019

In a previous version of this guide, we incorrectly listed the prize information for Pictures of the Year International. We regret the error and have updated accordingly.

World Press Photo

World Press Photo produces contests, workshops, exhibits and educational material, and its annual Photo Contest is the undisputed 800 lbs gorilla in photojournalism. The brand strength is immense, but seemingly can't escape some flavor of controversy from year to year. "Traditional" photojournalists have questioned the organization's ethics-bending approach to modernizing storytelling, but they are undoubtedly pulling a lot of levers to help raise the profile of photojournalism in a challenging environment dominated by social media and video.

DEADLINE

January 14, 2020

ENTRY FEES

No fee

2019 JURY

57% women, 57% POC

PROMISED EXPOSURE

All prize-winning photos are assembled into an exhibition that travels to 45 countries and published in a yearbook distributed worldwide.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

Given its never-ending controversies, we always have to bite our lip a little each year in extending our recommendation. Insofar as photojournalism is concerned, there is no more visible a prize in the industry, and the community pays attention. The prizes are rich and the marketing is impressive, and the organization offers more insight into its judging process than almost any other contest. Perhaps the scrutiny that the contest generates is proof of its importance and relevance.

PRIZES

€10,000

World Press Photo of the Year
+ travel expenses to the Award Ceremony in Amsterdam, Canon digital camera, and the Golden Eye Award.

€1,500 1st place in each category + the Golden Eye Award and sponsorship of their trip to the Awards Ceremony in Amsterdam

2nd and 3rd place receive the Golden Eye Award and a diploma



© John Moore, Getty Images

Istanbul Photo Awards

The Turkish state-run Anadolu Agency sponsored the first contest in 2014, attracting a who's who of photojournalism with solid cash prizes. The contest unsurprisingly pulls many photographers covering events in the Middle East and Europe with work that typically doesn't get much circulation in the US. Thus the winners often reflect a less Western point-of-view. The past juries have featured more eastern European and Arabic representation than your average contest, but the gender composition skews highly male like many contests.

DEADLINE

January 31, 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

March 2020

ENTRY FEES

No fee

2019 JURY

29% women, 29% POC

PRIZES

\$8,000

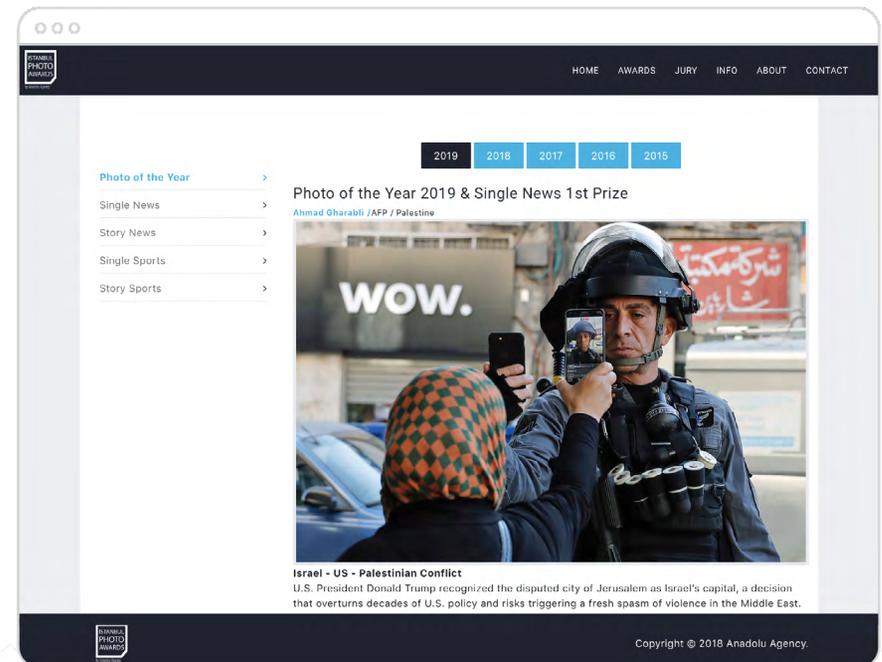
for photo of the year, plus four categories each with 1st (\$5,000), 2nd (\$3,000) and 3rd (\$1,500) prizes.

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Winners are published in a photobook that is circulated worldwide to photography professionals and displayed at significant galleries in Istanbul, Shanghai, New York, Vienna and Moscow.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

The contest provides generous cash awards in four categories for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place, and it's free to enter. Because the contest is targeted at working professionals (they can ask for proof of publication), your chances of winning are much better than many open ones. Compared to the dense legalese of most contests, the rules and terms are almost comically simple, but we like that!



NPPA Best of Photojournalism

The [National Press Photographers Association's](#) Best of Photojournalism (BOP) contests gained a new home in 2019 at the University of Georgia's Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication in Athens. The four divisions (still photography, video, online visual journalism, and editing) remain the same, but the contest committee reorganized the categories to "better reflect a rapidly changing industry." Unlike many photojournalism contests, the NPPA's gives equal weight to broadcast journalists.

DEADLINE

January 26, 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

March 2020

ENTRY FEES

No fee

for members

\$75

for non-members

PRIZES

\$10,000

+ 7 Sony Alpha cameras,
Tiffany crystals and plaques

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Published in the NPPA's Best of Photojournalism issue of News Photographer magazine and on the NPPA website

2019 JURY

60% women, 60% POC

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

There is no doubt that the NPPA award has cachet – particularly in the US – that all but guarantees exposure to top editors. Diversity discussions in the news business often revolve around who should be telling stories. And arguably contest judges should also reflect that diversity so that awards don't reflect outdated stereotypes – allowing richly developed narratives to be recognized. The NPPA has doubled down with an eye-popping level of women and POC on its jury, but it still lacks prizes that would help it compete with richer contests.



Photo by Lisa Krantz

In a previous version of this guide, we incorrectly listed the prize information for NPPA Best of Photojournalism. We regret the error and have updated accordingly.

Travel

International Landscape Photographer of the Year

Australian photographers David Evans and Peter Eastway serve as co-founders and co-curators of this landscape photography contest. Eastway (who has worked with Phase One) is a strong proponent of post-production techniques and as such, the contest doesn't have any restrictions on Photoshopping, but the source material must be a photograph. Some may find the winners' gallery to be a bit heavy-handed, but there's no doubt that the images catch the imagination and fancy of many consumers.

DEADLINE

October 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

February 2021

ENTRY FEES

\$25

per image (Every fifth entry is free.)

PRIZES

\$5,000

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Winners will be published online at the Awards' website and in the Book, both in print and electronically

2019 JURY

17% women, 0% POC

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

Legendary photojournalist and Contact Press Images co-founder David Burnett headlines the jury along with last year's winner Adam Gibbs. The winning images aren't everyone's cup of tea with landscape scenes that simply don't exist in real life. Still, the prize money is solid and the contest is one of the few that offers a hard printed book.



Photo by **Adam Gibbs**

Portrait

Kuala Lumpur International Photo Awards

If you were going to design a photo contest to raise the profile of your relatively small country (32 million people in a land mass similar to New Mexico), you couldn't do much better than the KLPA. Open to photographers of all levels, the Kuala Lumpur International Photo Awards focuses on contemporary portrait photography and has partnered with photo festivals around the world to exhibit the winning images.

DEADLINE

April 30, 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

May 2020

ENTRY FEES

\$15

per image,
discounts & early-bird available

2019 JURY

40% women, 60% POC

PRIZES

\$3000

First prize in each category

\$1000 Second prize

\$500 Third prize

All 50 finalists will have their images exposed and promoted at international festivals in conjunction with collaborative partners.

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition in Kuala Lumpur

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

The fee is nominal and the prizes are significant for a relatively small competition. KLPA is one of the only contests we've seen that has a specific clause prohibiting the exploitation of children in photos stating that they, "will reject any images submitted where the subject of children within the portrait image is deemed by our panel of judges to be have been physically or mentally abused, exploited, coerced to pose." We love that the contest commissions a different artist each year to design the winner's trophy. For 2019, Yukako Shibata designed an iridescent "egg" that beats the heck out of a piece of lucite.



Photo by **Dan Nelken**, Kuala Lumpur International Photo Awards

Moran Contemporary Photographic Prize

Founded in 1988 in celebration of Australia's bicentennial, the Moran Prize is Australia's richest photo contest with a A\$50,000 grand prize (the Moran's National Portrait Prize offers a gigantic A\$150,000 prize). The only stipulation for entry is that the photographer must be an Australian citizen and photographers are encouraged to explore the theme of "Contemporary Life in Australia."

DEADLINE

March 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

October 2020

ENTRY FEES

\$25

per entry

PRIZES

A\$50,000

all finalists receive A\$1,000

PROMISED EXPOSURE

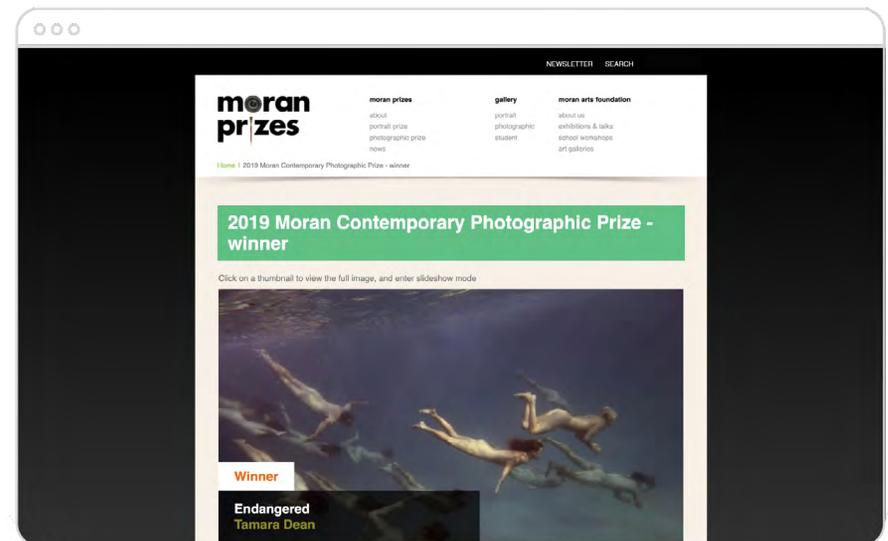
Exhibition at Juniper Hall in Paddington
NSW + traveling exhibition

2019 JURY

33% women, 0% POC

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

Aussies will tell you that the winners tend to be quirky and quixotic, but there's no doubting that the Moran Contemporary Photographic Prize is an incredibly well-funded competition with a limited rights grab. Limited marketing exposure won't turn the winner into an overnight sensation, but A\$50,000 can buy a lot of plane tickets.



Taylor Wessing Portrait Prize

In 2003, the National Portrait Gallery in the UK established a Photographic Portrait Prize with Schweppes as the title sponsor. In 2008, the international law firm Taylor Wessing took over the naming rights to the international contest which accepts submissions from amateurs and professionals alike. The association with the Gallery has certainly helped boost the contest's credibility, and the four month-long exhibition proves that the Gallery stands behind the prize.

DEADLINE

June 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

October 2020

ENTRY FEES

£30

per image

PRIZES

£15,000

PROMISED EXPOSURE

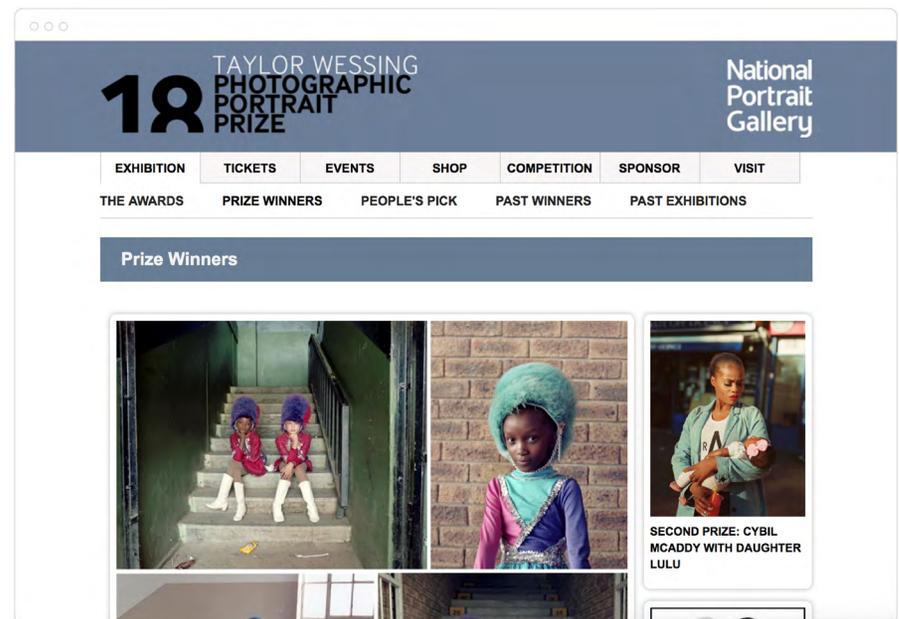
Exhibition at the UK's National Portrait Gallery, an exhibition that regularly attracts an average of 40,000 visitors each year, alongside significant press coverage.

2019 JURY

50% women, 17% POC

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

Other than the Moran Contemporary Portrait Prize, which is only open to Australian citizens, the Taylor Wessing Portrait Prize has the largest cash prize of any of the contests we recommend. And the exhibition at NPG is well-curated, printed and attended.



Specialty

Insight Investment Astronomy Photographer of the Year

Insight Investment, a global asset management firm, is the title sponsor for one of the world's premier astrophotography contests. Hosted by the [Royal Museums Greenwich](#), the Astronomy Photographer of the Year competition awards great images of the sky and space in eight categories.

DEADLINE

March 6, 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

October 2020

ENTRY FEES

No fee

PRIZES

£10,000

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition at the National Maritime Museum in the UK; published in the Astronomy Photographer of the Year book, significant press coverage.

2019 JURY

44% women, 11% POC

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

The rights grab is aggressive (particularly the paltry £50/image merchandising payment which is limited to ten years), but the Overall Winner prize is big, and the contest offers three cash prizes in each category. Press exposure is significant with publications like The Guardian, BBC, Gizmodo, Petapixel, Al Jazeera and more. Whether you're a fan of wide field or deep space astrophotography, your photos will be surrounded by jaw dropping images from around the world. No other astrophotography contest can compete.

“ I can confirm a nice increase in visits and followers to my website and social media pages following the announcement of the winning images. Whether that attention leads to an increase in opportunities is going to vary quite a bit based on the level to which a contestant's work is already in the public eye.”

– Alan Friedman, 2019 Winner in the Sun category

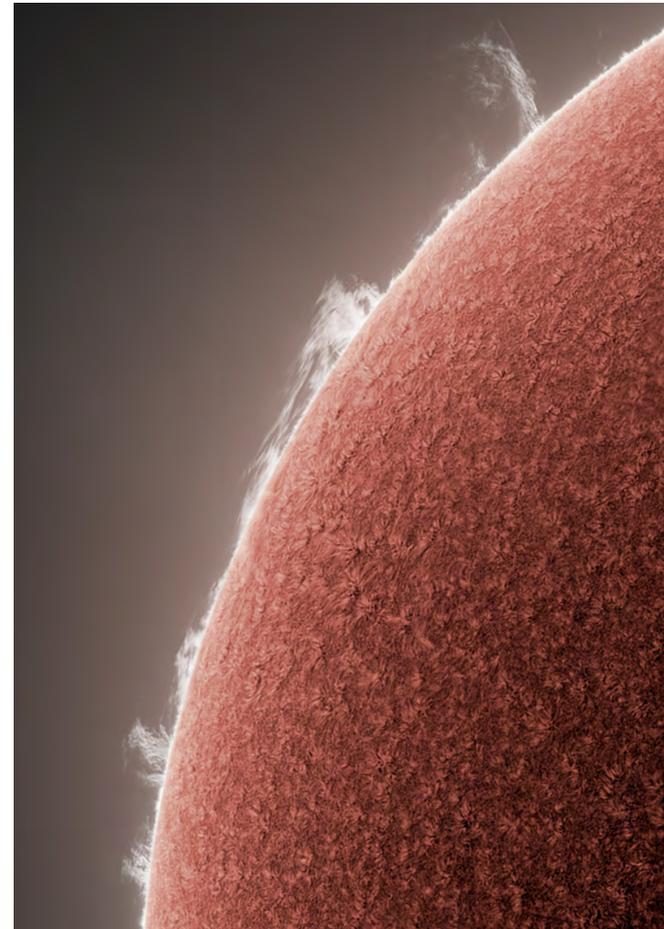


Photo by Alan Friedman/[avertedimagination.com](#)

Nikon Small World Photomicrography Contest

The Nikon Small World Photomicrography Competition is regarded as the leading forum for showcasing the natural world through the light microscope (macro photography is not permitted). Unlike general photography where macro lenses are relatively common, the average photographer doesn't own a microscope, so many of the entrants tend to be scientists. In 2011, the contest added a motion category and entrants have submitted both real-time and timelapse movies that will make your jaw drop. The 2018 winners ranged in magnification from 1:1 to 100x magnification using a variety of techniques from reflected light to focus stacking to 3D conofocal microscopy.

DEADLINE

April 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

October 2020

ENTRY FEES

No fee

PRIZES

\$3,000

towards Nikon equipment (first prize);
total of (20) prizes totaling over \$11,000

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Small World Exhibit travels throughout
North America at selected museums and
centers for science.

2019 JURY

40% women, 0% POC

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

Like other forms of "nature" photography, the Small World Contest is an amazing niche opportunity for non-professional photographers – from scientists to school teachers – to compete on a world stage. Although the subject matter and equipment is highly specialized, Nikon still manages to offer 20 prizes with cash awards, plus a few more honorable mentions for good measure. The winning images reveal an astonishing world just beyond the limits of human vision.

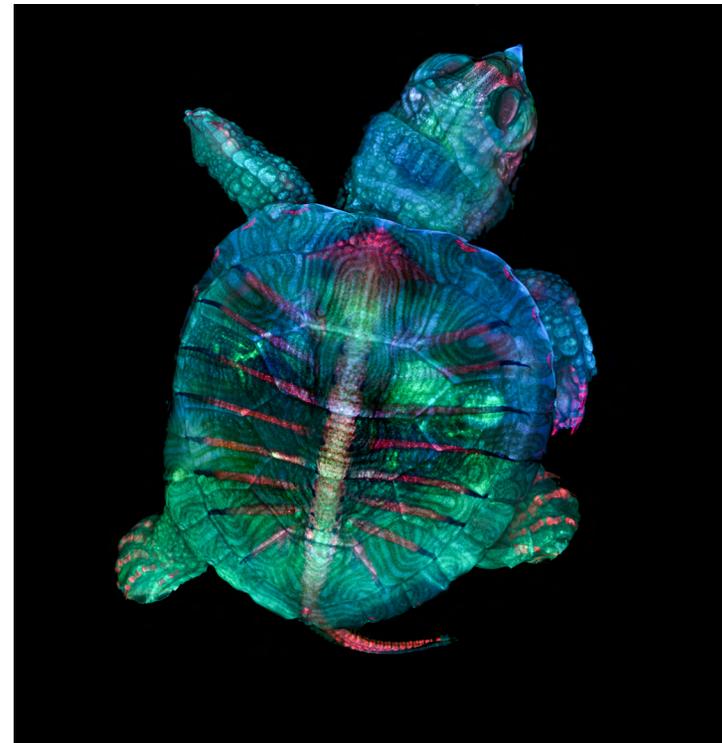


Photo by **Teresa Zgoda and Teresa Kugler**, 2019 Photomicrography Winners

Red Bull Illume

The contest was previously held every three years, but due to “globally growing interest in photography,” Red Bull is moving to a biennial format starting in 2019. In the meantime, Red Bull created a partnership with the new LUMEN Museum atop Mount Kronoplatz-Plan de Corones in the South Tyrolean Alps to host a permanent exhibition of mountain sports photography culled from previous editions of Illume. Like the extreme sports depicted in the photos, the contest is highly competitive. The 2016 edition received more than 34,500 entries from 5,646 photographers in 120 countries.

DEADLINE

Summer 2021

PRIZES

Range of prizes from global partners in the photography, adventure and action sports industries.

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Finalists' images shown to millions via Red Bull Illume Channels and media outlets around the world. In addition their images travel in the Global Exhibit Tour and will be featured in the limited-edition coffee table book.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

Many of the winning photographers whom we've talked to in the past have nothing but praise for the well-organized contest. It doesn't hurt that Red Bull's marketing reach is enormous, and although the prizes haven't yet been announced, the 2016 contest offered up a Leica S2 camera system worth \$20,000 – and winning the top prize is sure to give you wings.



© Ale Di Lullo / Red Bull Illume

Multiple Category/Open

Sony World Photography Awards (Open Competition)

Scott Gray founded the World Photography Organisation (WPO) in 2007 to raise the profile of photography, particularly as it relates to the art photography marketplace. With Sony as title sponsor, the World Photography Organisation's World Photography Awards has grown into one of the best and most visible contests in the past few years. The contest winners are widely published online and the exhibition at London's Somerset House in central London continually attracts visitors. The Awards are composed of four entry fee-free competitions: Professional, Open, Student or Youth competitions.

DEADLINE

January 7, 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

May 2020

ENTRY FEES

No fee

PRIZES

\$5,000

plus flight/accommodation to London to attend the Sony World Photography Awards.

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibit at the Somerset House in London.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

It's free to enter, the prizes are solid and the exhibition is top notch and attracts a lot of visitors. Unlike some contests, the Awards attract entrants from around the world, and the winners are reflective of a global perspective.

Disclosure: World Photography Organisation partners with PhotoShelter to produce this guide.

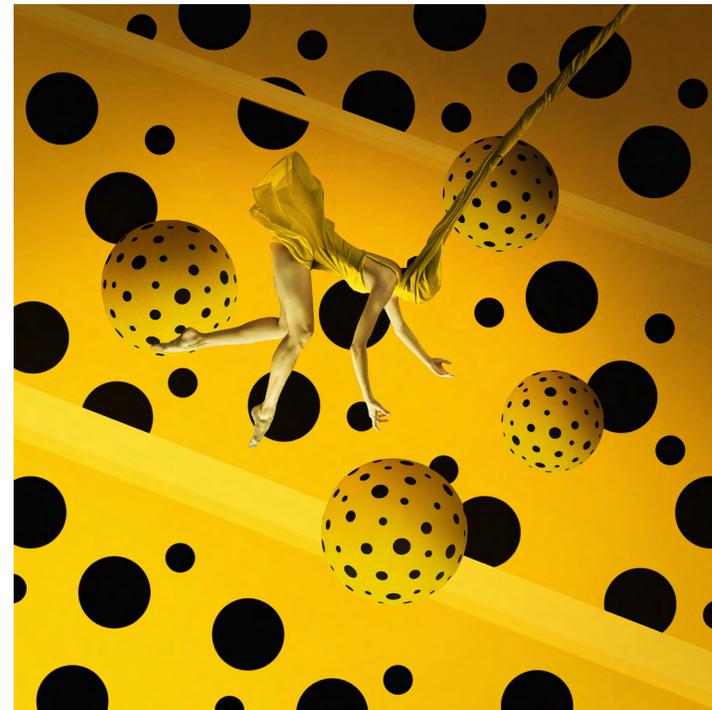


Photo by **Hardijanto Budyman**, 2019 Sony World Photography Awards

Sony World Photography Awards (Professional)

If there's any doubt about the legitimacy of the "Photographer of the Year" award, just take a look at the winners in the past few years: Andrea Gjestvang, Sara Naomi Lewkowitz, John Moore, Asghar Khamseh, Alys Tomlinson. There is unquestionably a bias towards documentary photography for the top prize, but the competition's ten categories provide opportunity for photographers of all stripes to gain some coveted recognition. Although the professional competition jury has an undeniable western bias, the pedigrees are notable, and the winners will certainly have an incredible networking opportunity.

DEADLINE

January 14, 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

May 2020

ENTRY FEES

No fee

2019 JURY

50% women, 17% POC

PRIZES

\$25,000

+ membership for the World Photography Academy, flight/accommodation to London to attend the Sony World Photography Awards, and Sony camera equipment. Category winners receive flight/accommodation to London and Sony camera equipment.

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibited at the Somerset House in London; published in the winners book; featured in online gallery; opportunity to be represented by the World Photography Collection.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

A huge cash prize, plus gear, plus an exhibition, plus travel and expenses to the awards – there isn't much not to like about this contest. The contest continues to attract top notch talent, and the exhibit is in the heart of London. We like that the jury includes photographers, curators and editors.



Photo by **Karina Bikbulatova**, 3rd Place, 2019 Sony World Photography Awards

Disclosure: World Photography Organisation partners with PhotoShelter to produce this guide.

ZEISS Photography Award

In 2016, heralded lens manufacturer Zeiss joined forces with the World Photography Organization to launch the Zeiss Photography Award. Behind the brand strength of Zeiss and marketing reach of the World Photography Organisation, the awards attracted nearly 12,000 photographers from 146 countries in 2017. The contest's 2020 theme is "Seeing Beyond – Discoveries."

DEADLINE

February 4, 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

May 2020

ENTRY FEES

No fee

PRIZES

€12,000

Choice of Zeiss lenses + €3,000 to cover travel costs for a photo project, invitation to Zeiss headquarters in Germany to try out various Zeiss lenses.

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibited at Somerset House, London during the Sony World Photography Awards Exhibition.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

No entry fee, a trip to Zeiss headquarters, an exhibition at the Somerset House, and €12,000 in Zeiss lenses? Yes, that's enough to buy the full Otus lens bundle. We didn't even mention the 3-year limit on using your images to promote the contest. All-in-all, a pretty good deal.

Disclosure: World Photography Organisation partners with PhotoShelter to produce this guide.



Photo by Rory Doyle

“Most importantly, the award brought attention to people in Mississippi who are so overlooked, and this was on a global level. As a result, my work was picked up by international outlets, and it really allowed me to share the photos with the world. I couldn't ask for anything more.”

– Rory Doyle, 2019 Zeiss Photography Award Grand Prize Winner

PDN Photo Annual

There are a number of multi-category contests, but none are backstopped with flagship publication that still carries cachet to this day. The PDN Photo Annual awards the best in photography, featuring winning images in nine different categories ranging from editorial assignments, photojournalism, advertising, photo books, self-promo and more. Of the many contests that PDN runs throughout the year, the Photo Annual is arguably the most prestigious and most widely anticipated. To be clear, though, being selected as a “winner” in a given category doesn’t bring a bounty of prizes. Only those winning the “special prizes” earn cash. Entries need to be produced within twelve months of the deadline.

DEADLINE

June 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

September 2020

ENTRY FEES

\$50

for a single entry;
\$70 per series; special student rate of
\$35 per entry/series.

2019 JURY

66% women, 19% POC

PRIZES

\$5,000

Photographer of the Year Award
\$3,500 Marty Forscher Fellowship
Fund ash award
\$1,500 Student awards

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Winning images published as one-page profile in PDN's Photo Annual issue (sent to 5,000+ creatives) and online in the PDN Photo Annual Gallery (promoted to >500,000 readers and followers).

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

The Photographer of the Year award has dropped from \$10k to \$5k, but it’s hard to dismiss being associated with the PDN brand. Like the highly coveted PDN 30, Photo Annual recognition might lead you to append “award-winning” in front of your name, and not be laughed out of the room. No one is going to dispute your talent. Of all the PDN-produced contests, we think this is the most noteworthy.



Photo by Robert Yager

“ The contest is well run and easy to enter. It’s great for gaining exposure ...My work for Balenciaga had no photo credit on the images, so it has been incredibly helpful to have the exposure of the PDN contest.”

- Robert Yager, 2019 First Place Winner (Advertising/Corporate Work)

Leica Oskar Barnack Award

Since 1979, the Leica Oskar Barnack Award has been presented to a photographer “whose unerring powers of observation capture and express the relationship between man and the environment in the most graphic form.” The contest attracts a very international crowd and the past winners are diverse in their styles and approaches to photography. Entries must be taken in past calendar year; only one entry per person (2300 portfolios were submitted last year); The main award is only open to professional photographers, and the Newcomer award is open to aspiring professionals aged 25 and under. The gritty vibe of the winners in the past few years feels palpably different than many contests, and social and cultural issues have dominated the winner’s circle.

DEADLINE

April 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

September 2020

ENTRY FEES

No fee

2019 JURY

40% women, 0% POC

PRIZES

€25,000

Leica Oskar Barnack Award
+ Leica M and €10,000 lens

€10,000 Leica Oskar Barnack
Award Newcomer + Leica M and lens
Finalists: €2,500 each

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Inclusion at the Leica Booth during
Paris Photo

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

You can complain about the price of a Leica, but you can’t complain about the prizes in this contest. The prize money is the most of any camera manufacturer-branded contest by far. Even the newcomer gets a total prize package approaching USD\$20,000. Unlike many other contests, only the finalists are asked for a grant to use the images in connection with the contest.

Px3

Founded in 2007, the well-regarded “Prix de la Photographie, Paris” promotes photography from around the world in over 60 categories. The contest is similar to other big category contests like PDN Photo Annual, and is produced by the Farmani Group, the same for-profit organization that produces the International Photo Awards, The Lucie Awards, and more.

DEADLINE

April 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

June 2020

ENTRY FEES

\$30

per photo (\$20 student)

\$50

per series (\$40 student)

PRIZES

\$5,000

Photographer of the Year, professional

\$2,000 Best New Talent,
non-professional/student

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Winner's exhibition in Paris, published in
Px3 Annual Book

2019 JURY

42% women, 14% POC

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

In a relatively short time, Px3 has built significant recognition in the contest sphere, and attracts a who's who of photography. Given the high price of entry, the contest really should offer more cash prizes. A handsome printed catalog and winners' exhibition in Paris are the cherry on the pie, er, croissant.



Photo by **Melissa Cormican**

Prix Virginia

The biennial award is open to all professional women with the exception of photojournalism and advertising. The prize is funded by photographer/former art director Sylvia Schildge in memory of her grandmother and to demonstrate her “support for the recognition of women photographers.”

DEADLINE

May 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

November 2020

ENTRY FEES

No fee

2019 JURY

57% women, 0% POC

PRIZES

€10,000

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition in the L'Espace Oppidum in Paris, a feature in their newsletter and across social media channels, the winning photographer also gets the opportunity to pick a city around the globe and make personal work that will eventually be edited and published.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

Photography has had a history of the male gaze and until well into the digital revolution, it has been practiced by a majority male audience. Prix Virginia celebrates the female vision, and if you doubt the legitimacy of the approach, take a look at the work of the past winners, [Cig Harvey](#) (2018) and [Sian Davey](#) (2016). The work is intensely personal and the female perspective is central to the creation of the images. For women photographers, this is an obvious choice.



Photo by [Sian Davey](#)

APA Awards

APA is one of the most important trade organizations for commercial photographers with both national and local chapters around the US. Their annual awards is a veritable who's who of commercial and advertising photography with work that you've probably seen in the wild.

DEADLINE

July 7, 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

September 2020

ENTRY FEES

Tiered by membership level.

\$30 (Leaders),

\$35 (Professionals/Associates),

\$40 (Supporters),

\$45 (Contributors),

\$60 (Non-members)

PRIZES

\$12,000

in Prizes for Best of Show winner, including the Grand Prize, a Canon EOS 5DS Camera body.

The APA Awards provide over \$100,000 in Prizes across 34 winners.

2019 JURY

75% women, 19% POC

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

The entry fee is relatively high (especially for non-members), but the fees are offset by a large prize pool, which seems to have pleasantly surprised the winners. Plus you'll be competing with the cream of the crop.

Disclosure: PhotoShelter provides an award for the Awards.



Photo by Rebecca Moseman

“The APA National Award Competition is a great opportunity to get your work out in front of a distinguished panel of judges, and the exposure for finalists and winners outside of their local APA chapters is very beneficial. I was surprised and pleased to hear from the APA national director, who called me personally to share the good news of my Best of Show win. Both she and the director of my local APA chapter were more than accommodating in making sure I received the generous host of prizes, and that I've been satisfied with them. It's been a wonderful experience from start to finish, and I highly recommend this competition to fellow photographers.”

– Rebecca Moseman (Best of Show 2019)

International Photography Awards

The International Photography Awards (IPA) is an annual competition for professional, non-professional and student photographers produced by the Farmani Group, which has built a business around photo contests including the Lucies, Px3, Moscow International Foto Awards and many more. Its goal is to award achievements, discover new and emerging talent, and promote a general appreciation of photography.

DEADLINE

August 2020

ENTRY FEES

single photo:

\$35 (professional)

\$25 (non-professional)

\$15 (student)

2019 JURY

40% women, 27% POC

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Best of Show exhibition in multiple cities around the world; published in IPA book

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

Like the PDN Photo Annual, the IPAs encompass a wide range of categories, and the "winners" of those categories receive little more than a title. But the four cash-based awards are solid, and the entry fee is inline with other contests of this ilk.

PRIZES

\$10,000

Photographer of the Year (professional)

\$5,000

Discovery of the Year (non-professional)

+ trophy, invitation to Lucie Awards, Winner

Certificate and IPA Seal for all winners

Category Winners:

Professional: \$1000

Non-professional: \$500

+\$500 travel allowance to come to NY for the winner's event and "Best of Show" exhibition



Photo by Tom Putt, First place, Nature or Aerial Category

In a previous version of this guide, we incorrectly listed information for International Photography Awards. We regret the error and have updated accordingly.

Aperture Portfolio Prize

The Aperture Foundation is a non-profit arts institution founded in 1952 by photographers (Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange are two of the most recognizable) and photo critics. Today, the Foundation primarily acts as a publisher of photography through their magazine, exhibitions, books and online properties. The Aperture Portfolio Prize is open to anyone who is a print subscriber or online member of Aperture. The award seeks to “identify trends in contemporary photography and highlight artists whose work deserves greater recognition.”

DEADLINE

January 22, 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

April 2020

ENTRY FEES

Must be an Aperture magazine print subscriber

PRIZES

\$3,000

PROMISED EXPOSURE

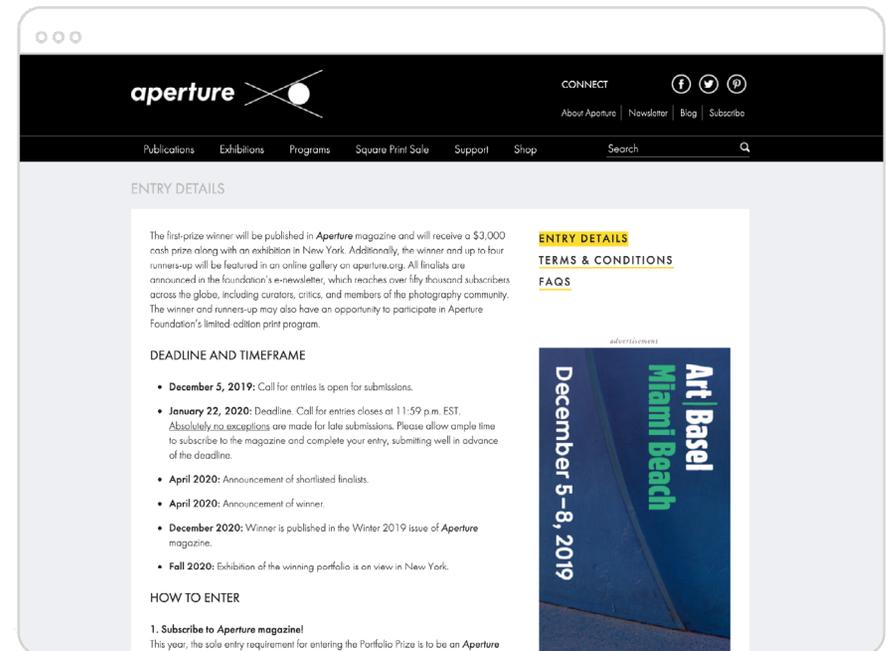
Exhibition at Aperture Gallery, published in 2020 issue of Aperture

2019 JURY

75% women, 0% POC

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

The stipulation of maintaining an *Aperture* magazine subscription in order to enter feels ham-handed, but we get it. If you want a prize from a print publication, then subscribe. It's hard to dispute the value of the brand and the important eyeballs that will see the winning work. A number of high profile creative directors have told us this is one of the awards they pay attention to each year to discover new faces in contemporary photography. Most contests make dubious claims about exposure, but professional photographers seeking to leverage a win into future work should really consider the Prize.



PART IV

Conclusion

There are many photo contests out there – almost too many to choose from. So before entering, you should make sure it's the right one for your business and brand. Take time to think through first why you want to enter your work and what you'd like to get out of the experience. Are you looking for exposure? Feedback? Prizes? Do you have high regards for those who have won in the past? Have you researched the jury? Do you know who is sponsoring the contest and whether they have any conflicts of interest with the subject of your photos?

Make sure you read through the contest Terms and Conditions, FAQs, plus look at previous winners' work to decide if it might be a good fit. Evaluating contests, prepping your images, and filing your entries can be incredibly time consuming and resource intensive without a clear return-on-investment. Align yourself with the competitions that are well-regarded and respected in the industry.

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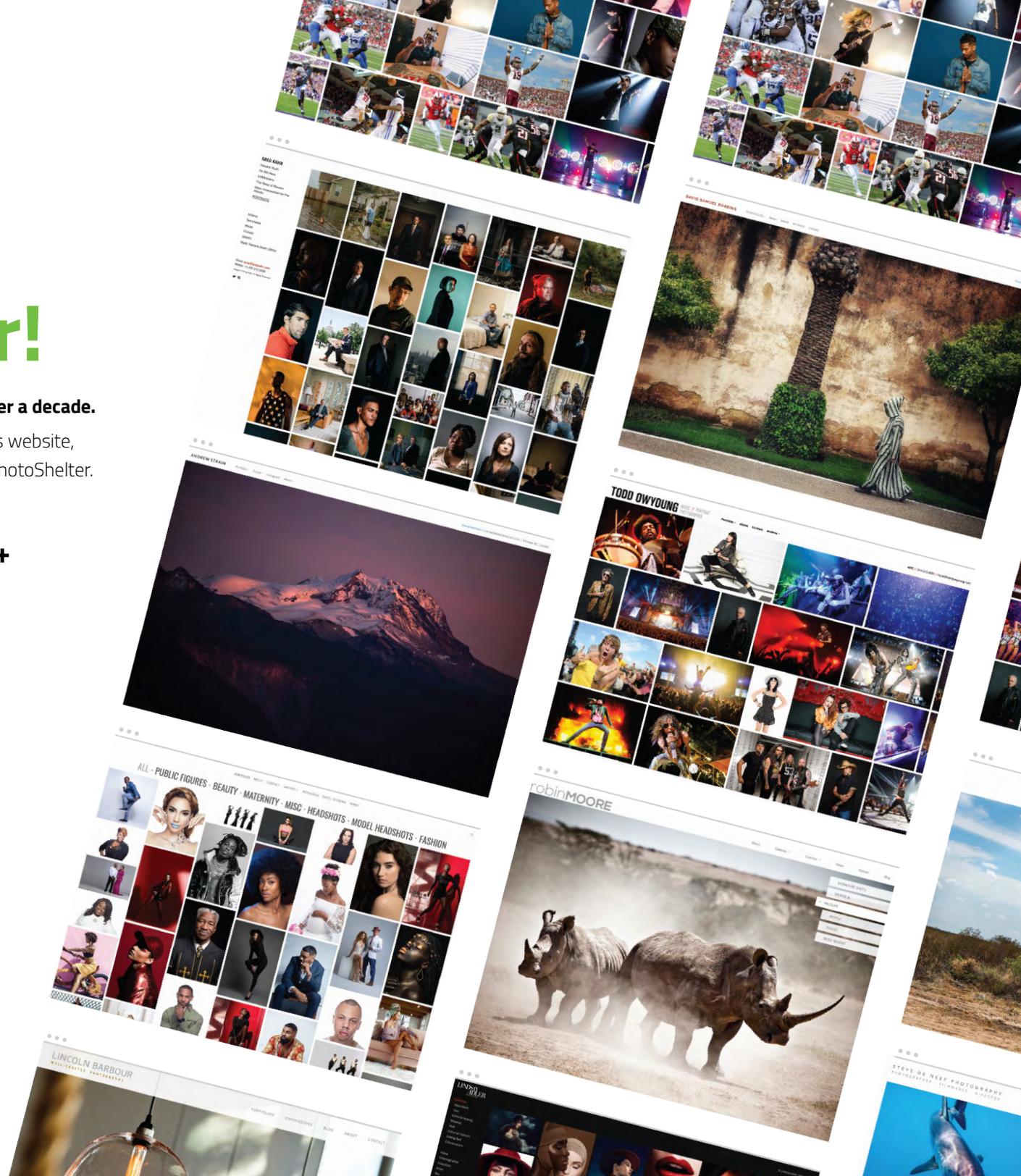
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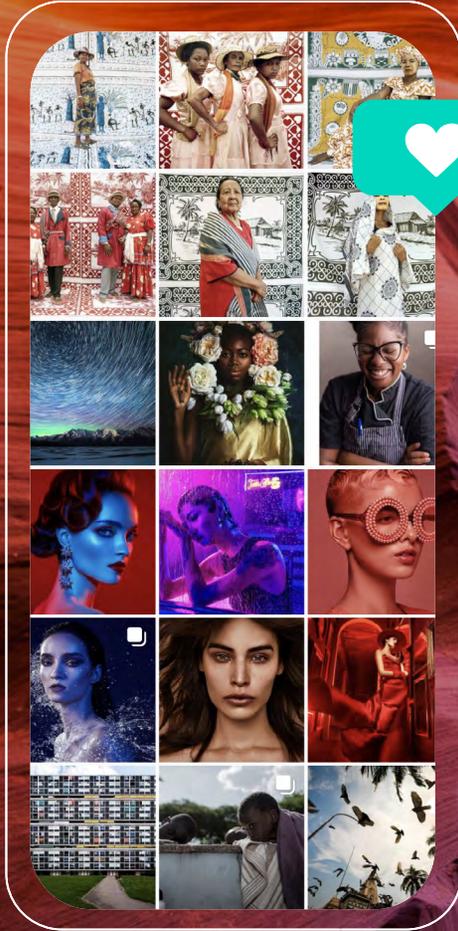
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