

## New York State Fair Photo Evaluation Tips: *How to show your stuff*

Exhibiting your photographs at the great New York State Fair provides unique challenges as your work is scrutinized for technical worthiness, composition, and overall presentation. Professional photographers will evaluate your images, provide feedback, and select the top prize winners. Use this brochure to get inside the mind of the evaluators and develop an understanding of how to best exhibit your work.

### EQUIPMENT: *Making great pictures*

Judges will first want to know about your equipment so be sure to provide great details when completing your E.I.S card (Exhibitor Information Statement) regarding what type of camera you're using as well as the types of settings such as manual or automatic. Be sure to specify your experience with photography as well as how your final image was produced. It's safe to say that you can not provide too much information!

Before you complete the E.I.S card, sketch out answers to the following key points:

- WHO shot the photo
- WHAT were you trying to communicate
- WHEN was the picture taken
- WHY did you select this particular image
- HOW was your image produced

LEARNING: While the images you submit for display should be visually strong enough to communicate on their own merit, the State Fair Photography judges want to understand the learning that took place, resulting in the final photo. At the Fair, please feel free to stop by the table as photographs are being judged. Evaluators often "think out loud" as they examine each submission and this process is often entertaining as well as informative.

### TECHNICAL SKILLS: *The art and science of photography*

Exhibiting at the State Fair requires not only good ideas on how to submit, mount and present photos but also good technical skills. Step one should be for you to shoot a lot of pictures, to the extent that your time and budget allow. In other words, don't think that you'll capture that perfect shot in one take. While there is such a thing as beginner's luck, winning photographs are the result of time and effort. Shoot your instincts but then pause and apply the principles of photography to create a photo that will capture the eye of the judges.

EXPOSURE: Winning entries must be properly exposed yet this does not mean that images can't be dark and moody. The calm before the storm may well be more appealing than a scene at the beach. When dealing with technical issues such as color, contrast, and exposure be sure to ask yourself how the finished copy makes you feel. Share your potential entries with relatives and friends and seek out their opinions. In the end, select the picture that most accurately reflects what you, as the photographer, were feeling when you shot the photo.

COMPOSITION: State Fair Photography evaluators will want to see evidence of strong composition. The photographs you choose to exhibit should be easily understandable for those who view them in terms of what is the main subject, what is your photograph saying to the viewers and perhaps most importantly, what makes a person want to keep looking at this image. Well composed photographs consider rules of composition yet breaking those rules often results in the more powerful image.

Rules of Composition:

- Keep Horizons off center--Tell a story-- Shoot close up for impact--Keep it simple--
- Human Interest--Use leading lines--Vary format-vertical/horizontal --Use props--Avoid mergers

PRESENTATION: Presenting your work in a strong and determined way is the key to having it survive the rigors of the judging process. Put some thought into where yours pictures will travel, who might be handling them, what the weather during the State Fair might be like. Ask yourself, "Will my image survive?" Obviously, at the state level, your work should be meticulous and not suffer from spots, scratches and streaks.

MOUNTING: When mounting your images be sure to use mounting materials that are sturdy and that won't curl into a ball on a humid day. If matting your pictures be sure to make all surfaces secure. Put every effort into doing your very best work as you prepare your work for the exhibition. Avoid fingerprints.

### CREATIVITY: NEW opportunity

The State Fair 4-H Photography judges wish to introduce a new category to the Photo Competition at the State Fair: Creative Framing. In years past, framing a print was not acceptable. The judges recognize, however, that adding a frame to certain images truly makes for spectacular work. The product becomes greater than the sum of all its parts.

The Creative Framing category will serve to level the playing field by giving everyone an opportunity to submit their work for judging, rather than having some of the best photographs relegated to display only.

**Each exhibitor may include one image in the Creative Framing category.**

*"Shoot what you're feeling, then shoot again and apply some rules of composition to make for a stronger visual image"*