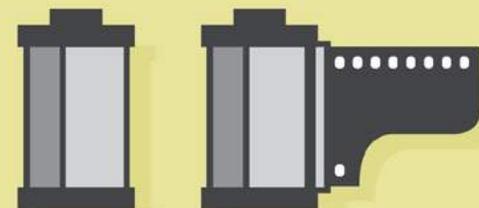
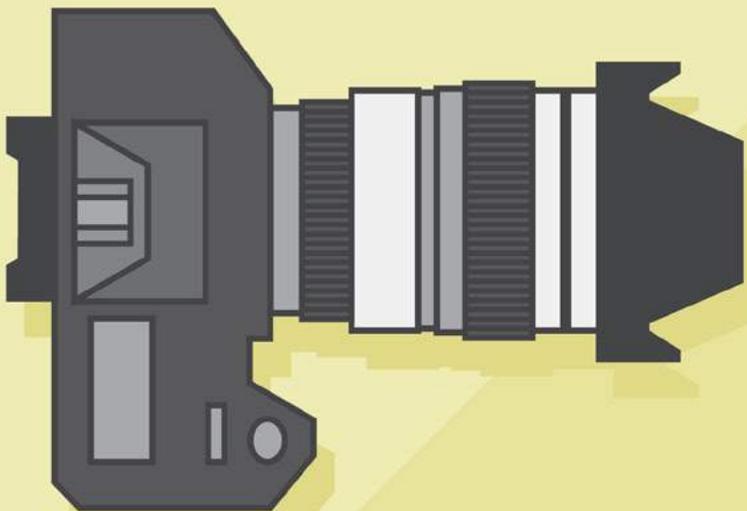
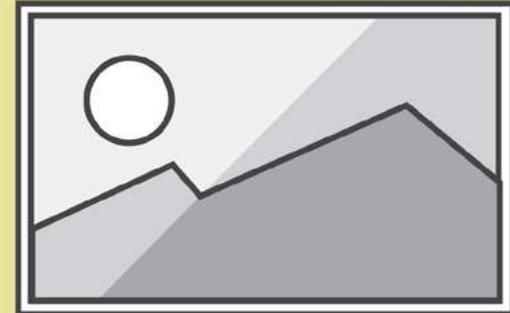
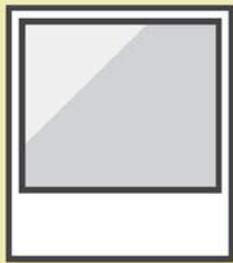
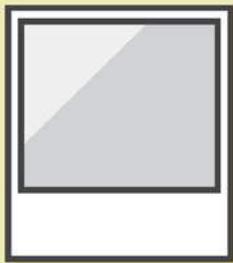
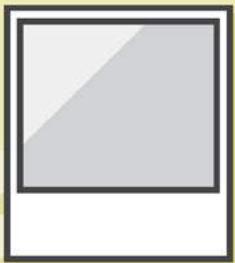


The Photographer's Guide to PHOTO CONTESTS

2016



an educational guide by:



PHOTOSHELTER

and

WPO
World Photography
Organisation

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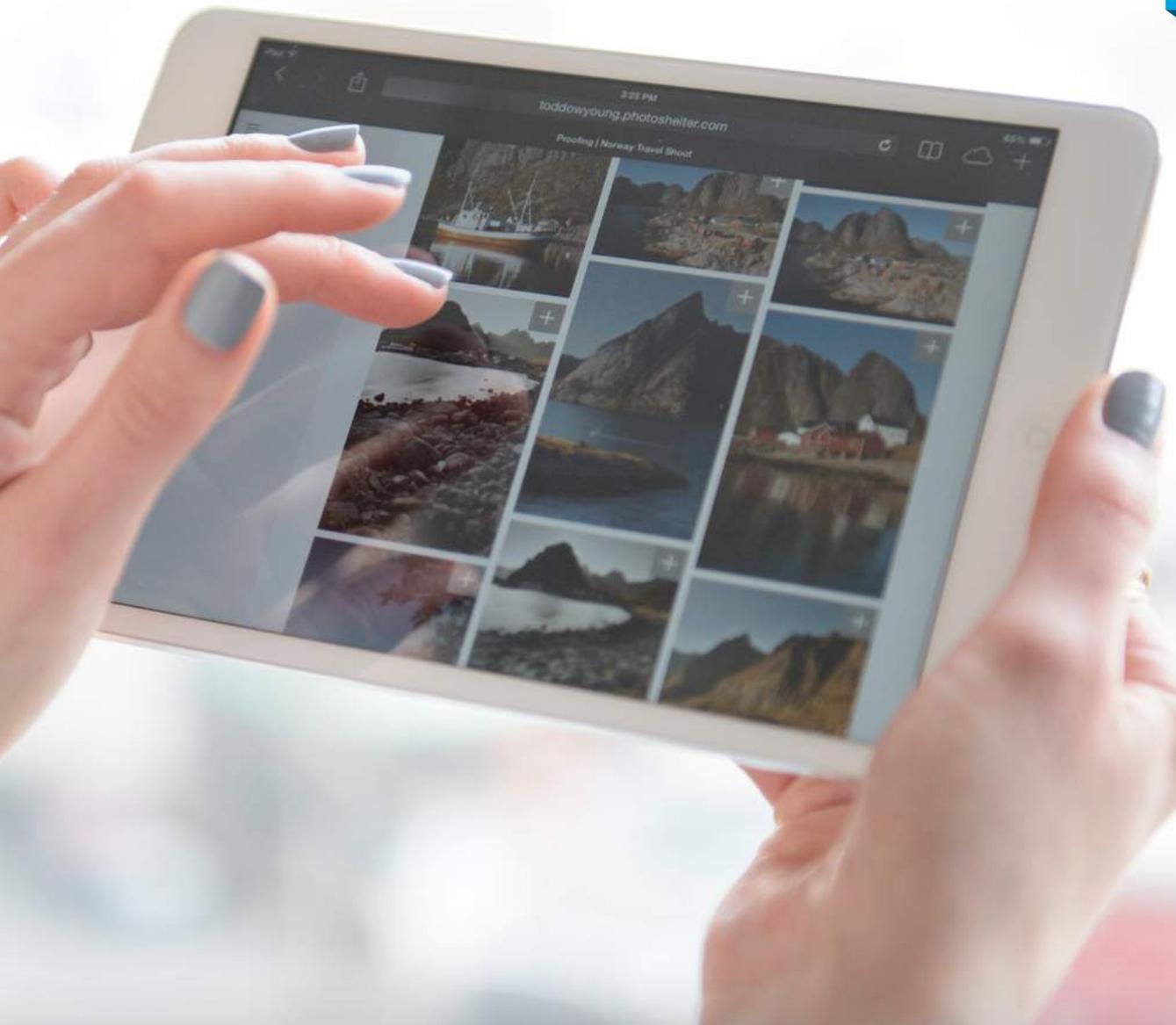
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Intro

Photo contests serve many different purposes for photographers. For some, contests can offer a simple way to judge yourself against others while providing varying levels of critical feedback. For others, contests can offer significant marketing exposure and monetary prizes and equipment. But all contests aren't necessarily worth your while. Unscrupulous contest promoters can demand overreaching rights grabs and require high entry fees. Many contests are simply cash making scams that appeal to the ego of the unwitting photographer. This guide, in partnership with the [World Photography Organisation](#), is designed to help you separate the wheat from the chaff.

We've compiled a list of thirty-six photo contests and rendered a verdict. Recommended contests are indicated by the  icon. Our subjective analysis is based on five criteria:

Entry fees:

Entry fees are often used as a way for unscrupulous contests to simply generate revenue. Many great contests have no entry fee. That said, entry fees can provide a way for contests to compensate judges.

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.

Submission rights:

Good contests restrict their rights-grabbing language and only use images in conjunction with promoting the contest and include appropriate photo credits. The best contests restrict their usage of the images to a few years.

Promised exposure:

Sometimes cash and equipment prizes aren't significant, but media exposure or exhibitions can bring ancillary benefits.

Feedback from past winners:

At the end of the day, winners need to feel sufficiently rewarded for entering the contest.

From these criteria, we've rendered a verdict for each contest. Although we include several "hobbyist" contests, the verdict is biased towards the professional (e.g. rights-grabs can significantly affect our recommendation). You can use this same criteria to evaluate contests that you encounter that we haven't reviewed. In almost all cases, the availability and amount of a cash prize is a good proxy for the worth of a contest.

Richest Prizes:

AUD\$50,000: Moran Contemporary Photography Prize

€25,000: Leica Oskar Barnack Award

£10,000: Wildlife Photographer of the Year

\$25,000: Sony World Photography Awards, Professional category

\$15,000: Arnold Newman Prize for New Directions in Photographic Portraiture

\$10,000: International Photographer of the Year

We strive to publish accurate details on the contest prizes and deadlines. However, in some cases, we were unable to verify 2016 contest information and therefore relied on 2015 information.

About the World Photography Organisation and The Sony World Photography Awards

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

Tell us about the World Photography Organisation.

Here at the [World Photography Organisation](http://www.worldphoto.org) (WPO) we just love photography. We celebrate its many varied forms, from photojournalism to commercial and fine art photography; we see the photographer as a true artist.

WPO works with student, emerging and professional photographers alike. We provide a global network across the photographic industry to not only raise the level of conversation around the subject of photography, but to also increase awareness and appreciation of this art form.

We offer a year-round programme of both public and industry events and work with photographers of all abilities worldwide to promote their work.

A few highlights of our programme include:

- » The Sony World Photography Awards—the world's largest photography competition
- » The Sony World Photography Awards exhibition and global tour
- » Student Focus programme—inspiring and working with the next generation of photographers
- » Photo Shanghai—Asia Pacific's premier art fair dedicated to photography
- » Photo San Francisco—America's new international art fair dedicated to photography

We hear the Sony World Photography Awards are the biggest in the world?

That's right; with nearly 80 categories the annual Sony World Photography Awards is the world's largest photography competition. It's open to everyone, from seasoned pros to aspiring snappers, and is totally free to enter at www.worldphoto.org/swpa

Since launching in 2008, the awards, sponsored by Sony, have brought untold reward and recognition to those involved. Each year they offer an incredible \$30,000 (USD) in cash prizes plus the latest Sony digital imaging equipment to its winners.

The 2015 awards had a record breaking 173,444 entries from 171 countries and in just two weeks 33,000 people saw the winners' exhibition in London.

Tell me more about the awards...

The Sony World Photography Awards has five competitions:

- » Professional (7 Documentary and 7 Art categories, judged on a series of images, aimed at serious photographers)
- » Open (10 categories, judged on a single image, open to all)
- » Youth (3 categories, judged on a single image, for photographers aged 19 and under)
- » Student Focus (for those studying photography)
- » National Awards (looking to find the best single shot taken by a local photographer from over 50 countries)

The awards offer categories across all genres and include current affairs, nature & wildlife, arts & culture, daily life, portraiture, contemporary issues, sport, landscape, environment, architecture, and more.

One overall winner, the L'Iris d'Or/ Professional Photographer of the Year, is chosen from the Professional category winners and there is one overall Open, Youth and Student winner too.

We respect photographers and their work which is why we support the [Artist Bill of Rights](#) and work closely with our photographers to ensure their images are always credited and used correctly.

When should I enter?

The 2016 awards is open right now. The deadline is 5th January 2016 for the Open, Youth and National Awards and 12th January 2016 for the Professional competition. All entries are free at www.worldphoto.org/swpa

The 2017 Sony World Photography Awards, the tenth edition of the competition, will open on 1 June 2016.

And what about the prizes?

Yes, there is \$30,000 (USD) in cash prizes and the latest digital imaging equipment from Sony for the winners, but the awards offer much more to both its winners and those on the shortlist. Our aim is to offer these photographers exposure and recognition on a global scale. Past photographers have been:

- » Shown as part of the annual Sony World Photography Awards Exhibition at Somerset House, London and included in global tours of the show
- » Published in the annual Sony World Photography Awards hardcover book
- » Featured across the WPO website and social platforms
- » Included in the global press campaign for the awards which in 2015 received over 740,660 articles, seen by over 950 million people worldwide

How does the Sony World Photography Awards help photographers?

A good question, but rather than us telling you, here's what some past winners have said about the awards:

Sophie Gamand, 2014 Portraiture Photographer of the Year comments: "I received tons of press, and worldwide attention. Being able to have that "stamp of approval" from such a prestigious organisation and jury, and from the photography community, was huge for me, from a personal and professional level. By gaining so much added exposure, I met clients, my audience grew exponentially, which led to me signing with a wonderful gallery, and getting many professional gigs. It mostly gave me the confidence I needed in my work."

2013 Photographer of the Year Andrea Gjestvang adds: "Winning the L'Iris d'Or was a great recognition and it made my work reach out to a worldwide audience. Editors, collectors and potential collaborators in the business, but most importantly normal readers were moved and engaged by the images. It opened up new opportunities for me, and was a huge motivation to continue following the stories that I believe in."

Read on to find out why two more winning photographers entered and why they recommend you should enter the Sony World Photography Awards. Also in Part III, see PhotoShelter's evaluation of the Awards—and discover why they endorse the competition.

Interview with John Moore

L'Iris d'Or / Photographer of the Year 2015, Sony World Photography Awards

[American photographer John Moore](#) won the Sony World Photography Awards' L'Iris d'Or title in 2015 for his powerful series 'Ebola Crisis Overwhelms Liberian Capital'.

Congratulations on your success at the 2015 Sony World Photography Awards. Tell us more about your winning series.

I had covered many areas of war and conflict, humanitarian disasters and danger zones worldwide, but this was the first time I had tried to photograph the effects of such a deadly viral epidemic on this scale. I heard in the spring of 2014 about the new Ebola outbreak in Guinea, but it was in August when I read that Doctors Without Borders (MSF) were calling it potentially catastrophic in the Liberian capital city of Monrovia, it really got my attention. I quickly began researching how to keep safe while working in the hot zone. I also spoke with some journalists based locally in Liberia and put together a coverage plan for my editors at Getty. Four years after the death of my Getty colleague Chris Hondros in Libya, we are very cautious about photographer safety in hazardous environments, so much time and effort goes into precautionary measures.

The scenes of sickness and death I witnessed were devastating for me to see and to photograph. I will always be grateful to those grieving family members who agreed to allow me into their lives to document such powerful moments, in order to show the world that their country needed more international assistance.

How did shooting this series impact you personally?

Of course this series impacted me on a personal level. I'm certain that if it didn't then I wouldn't have been able to connect with those people and work in such a



© John Moore/Getty Images

bio-hazardous environment. Besides, I have young children, now including a baby boy, and seeing children so sick and vulnerable, with a disease that has no cure, was horrifying to me.

What does winning this prize mean to you?

The Sony World Photography Awards were a real highlight for me this year. The year 2014 produced some of the biggest and most visual international stories in

recent memory, and there are many great photojournalists covering them, producing extraordinary work. Much of that work was entered in this competition.

For my photos to be selected means very much to me, it was a real honor and the \$25,000 prize was extraordinary. The World Photography Organisation very actively promotes the Sony World Photography Awards on social media platforms, so they really do bring wide exposure to the work.

Plus the exhibition of all the winners' work at Somerset House in London is very well done and drew huge crowds. I would recommend this competition to all photographers who want to highlight their work.

What is your background? How did you get into photography?

I began taking photographs while in high school in Irving, Texas. My mentor and advisor there, Sherri Taylor, must have seen something in me and pushed me very hard. I later graduated from the University of Texas at Austin from their communications department and went to work for the Associated Press for 13 years abroad, first based in Nicaragua, then India, South Africa, Mexico and then Egypt. I then switched to Getty Images, first based in Pakistan and then moving back to the United States. I currently live in New York City and travel domestically and internationally from here. I was just back in Iraq last week.

Do you have a photographic philosophy?

When I am working as I should, I try to treat people with respect and photograph them with dignity. This helps me to, at times, gain exclusive access into difficult situations and then depict those I photograph as dignified human beings. First I try to identify a story or angle on a story that I see has not yet been covered much. Then I work hard to find access—safe access—to the tough stories. Even those who normally would be predisposed to refuse you access will open their doors if you adequately explain to them that what they do is important and that there is value in showing that visually. Showing



© John Moore/Getty Images

kindness and respect to those we photograph is the best way to get inside a story. People living in desperate and undignified moments of their lives appreciate photojournalists who treat them with dignity and reflect that in their photographs.

How do you relax after a long trip—especially when you are shooting such emotionally and physically challenging subject matters?

I don't get to relax that much after working in dangerous and hostile environments. Although I may take time off, I am always planning the next trip, and I take very seriously the legwork that goes into each travel assignment. Getty Images gives me great support in terms of time to do that - to arrange all my global logistics for each story and set up my itinerary, both for travel and for story coverage. They have put their trust in my abilities and help guide me to overcome logistical hurdles along the way and I am grateful.

Follow John Moore:

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© John Moore/Getty Images



© John Moore/Getty Images

Interview with Mario Wezel

People Photographer of the Year 2014, Sony World Photography Awards

[German photographer Mario Wezel](#) has wasted no time in establishing himself on the international photography scene. At 27 years old he has already been recognised internationally, including winning the People Photographer of the Year prize at the 2014 Sony World Photography Awards.

Tell us about your photographic style?

No matter where I take pictures, it is important to me that I know why I'm doing it. The purpose of photographing for me is to tell a story. Most of the time it's someone else's story, sometimes it's my story. I love if both stories come together in one picture. My photographic style can be described as journalistic although I don't believe that a photographer can be objective. I'm more interested in pictures that make the viewer feel something and transport an emotion rather than explaining something in a practical way.

Your work often tackles social issues connected to families/communities of people. What is it about this area of work that attracts you? Also, do you find the people you wish to photograph first, or focus on the social issue and then find people to represent the story?

The stories I have been working on in the past three years have mostly evolved from a personal interest. I find topics that were in some way close to me and felt very natural to think and research about. I've always tried to establish a personal connection with the topic first. After that the research begins and it's only in the end that I find or meet protagonists for the story. What interests me is not necessarily one topic or group of people in particular. I'm interested in the way we have established certain values in our society and how these values can be seen in everyday life. I often choose topics that I can learn from as a person. In some way you could say that I'm educating myself and learning about the world through the stories I do and the people I meet. In the end I'm trying to find my place in-between all these fascinating characters and places.



© Mario Wezel, Germany, Winner, People, Professional, 2014 Sony World Photography Awards

Your series, 'One in Eight Hundred', won the People category at the 2014 Sony World Photography Awards. Please tell us more about this series of work and its inspiration.

I started photographing Emmy and her family in 2013. We spent three months together until I had to move back to Germany. I had spent a year at the Danish School of Media and Journalism and this was my final project. In the end it became much more than that. I didn't just create a body of work that helped me get recognised but I made four really good friends. I'm still in Denmark twice a year to see Emmy and her family. Sometimes I'm photographing, sometimes I'm not but I'm very grateful that they allowed me to get to them. The inspiration for the story was very Nordic, I think. The



© Mario Wezel, Germany, Winner, People, Professional, 2014 Sony World Photography Awards

classes at DMJX were full of inspiration and passion for photography and one another. Many projects that were produced there were inspirational to me like Laerke Posselts 'Beautiful Child' and Thomas Lekkfeldts 'A star in the sky'. In the end I think the biggest influence was the work of another Danish photographer: Joakim Eskildsen. His series 'Homework' left a huge impression on me and the dreamlike landscapes he captured brought back the photographic naiveté inside of me.

Were there any particular challenges when shooting this series?

I talked about inspiration before and I think it is important to have it but also important to let it go in the right moment. Otherwise you end up copying and not creating. Before I started shooting I was afraid I would not be able to establish a connection with the family but from the first moment it was very natural to be around each other. We were really honest and direct with one another and that really helped a lot.



© Mario Wezel, Germany, Winner, People, Professional, 2014 Sony World Photography Awards

Do you have a favourite image from this series?

One of my favourite images is of Emmy and her brother Kristian walking through a green field. It was a summer evening and we were on our way back from the supermarket when Karina, Emmy's mother, pulled over on the side of the road and we went out to walk through the field. It was beautiful. The fields went on to the horizon and the two kids were running around exploring nature. For me it is an important image because it talks about the time of being a child and exploring the world around you. It is a scene of normality that hopefully many people can relate to. In a story about a little girl with special needs, this normality was very important for me to show. That image really symbolizes that and touches on the general topic of exploring the world and being a child.

What effect did winning the Sony World Photography Award have on your career?

Winning was fantastic. It was the first international award that I won and gave me great confidence in my work. I'm often very critical towards my own work, and although an award like the Sony World Photography Awards doesn't take that away completely, it tells you that you are doing something right. I met many great people from the industry through the award and established some good connections. The exposure was also great. What I like about the Sony World Photography Awards is that it's not only for the photography industry itself but also a wider audience that learns to appreciate photography through these awards.

Why would you encourage others to enter the Sony World Photography Awards?

I think editing a story for a competition helps you find out which images tell your story in the best way possible. It helps you grow, especially as a young photographer. It is interesting to compete with other professionals but also it is a great opportunity to create a wider network. It is not just about presenting yourself and your own work but also about creating a community of photographers, editors and a bigger audience to discuss photography and the topics related to the stories.

As someone who has been recognised by a number of photography awards at an early stage of your career, do you have any tips for others entering competitions such as the Sony World Photography Awards?

I think it is a lot about trusting your instincts. There are thousands of interesting topics out there but not all of them are made for you. I think it is important to find a way to really connect to the topics you choose and look for a deeper, more personal connection to it. Only then will the work be strong, believable and interesting. Once you have found this topic, it is important to take a step back and not make it about you anymore. It is about the people you photograph. It is about the empathy you have for them and the trust you can build with them. Photography can be powerful and remind us of so many things we forget about in everyday life. But if you follow your



© Mario Wezel, Germany, Winner, People, Professional, 2014 Sony World Photography Awards

heart and treat people with respect, stories will be produced that talk about life in a more general way and that teach us much more than shutter speed, f-stop or what kind of camera we use.

Follow Mario Wezel

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Enter the awards for free: www.worldphoto.org/swpa

PART III:

*36 Photo Contests to Consider
(or Avoid)*

*Contests organized by deadline

Pictures of the Year International

Pictures of the Year International (POYi) is one of the oldest and most prestigious photojournalism programs in the world. POYi itself is a non-profit dedicated to promoting documentary photographers and freelance photojournalists, and the competition celebrates great work from photojournalists worldwide.

DEADLINE

January

PRIZES

USD\$1,000

and Tiffany crystal trophy for
Photographer of the Year and
Documentary Project of the Year

ENTRY FEES

\$50 per entry

PROMISED EXPOSURE

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

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

Past winner [James Oatway](#) says, “as a South African photographer, it was extremely meaningful to have my work recognized on this international stage.” He also appreciates that his stories received more exposure through the contest.

VERDICT

POYi still attracts talented photographers, but one can't help but feel like they're coasting a bit on their illustrious history, rather than trailblazing the way for photojournalism contests. The prize money is small compared to other contests, which undoubtedly influences the applicant pool.



© James Oatway

World Press Photo

The past few years have been trying for World Press Photo with a spat of controversy regarding manipulation and ethics of the winners. Still, the contest is arguably the most influential and internationally acclaimed in photojournalism—and the organization continues to try to educate and elucidate issues pressing the industry today.

DEADLINE

January

.....

PRIZES

€10,000

for World Press Photo of the Year

.....

ENTRY FEES

none

PROMISED EXPOSURE

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

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Mads Nissen's](#) image of two young gay men in Russia took top honors in 2015. Nissen believes that World Press Photo represents much more than a contest. “Before I became a photographer myself, I remember how I would visit the exhibitions in Copenhagen. I didn’t pay the slightest attention to the names of the photographers - all I cared about was the images: the stories in the images, the people in the images, the poetry, the rawness, the unexplainable aura that some images just have.” 2014 winner [John Stanmeyer](#) recommends, “Enter for the greater potential of communication, not for self interest.”

VERDICT

The cash prize, exhibit and master classes put World Press Photo largely into a category of their own. Their ability to create clarity in the judging criteria in the next few years will largely determine the seriousness with which the industry accords them continued respect.



© Mads Nissen

Sony World Photography Awards (Open and Youth Competition)

Since 2008, Sony has sponsored the World Photography Awards—one of the most highly visible photographic awards program in the world. Students, amateur enthusiasts and established professional photographers are encouraged to apply and submit their work in Professional, Open, Student or Youth categories.

DEADLINE

January 5, 2016

PRIZES

USD \$5,000

+ flight/accommodation to London to attend the Sony World Photography Awards (open).
Flight/accommodation (youth).

ENTRY FEES

none

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibit at the Somerset House in London

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Antony Crossfield](#), winner of the Enhanced category, raves about the “unparalleled exposure” that the contest brings, and believes the Somerset House “is a fantastic venue for the exhibition.” [Hector Muñoz Huerta](#), winner of the Arts and Culture category, says the diversity of categories demonstrates “that the spirit of the contest is very forward thinking.” He’s also quick to point out the allure of the “substantial” prizes.

VERDICT

With a rich cash prize, exhibition, and massive press coverage, the Sony World Photography Awards sit near the top of our recommended contests. Also notable: The contest supports the Artists Bill of Rights and use of images is restricted to three years. Winners are typically covered by media outlets like The Atlantic, Washington Post, Telegraph UK, Mashable, and many more.

Enter the awards for free: www.worldphoto.org/swpa



© Antony Crossfield

Sony World Photography Awards (Professional)

The Sony World Photography Awards is recognized as the leading photographic awards program in the world. Launched in 2008, the awards are dedicated to supporting and cultivating photographic culture. The Professional division requires a series of images, whereas a single image can be entered in the Open division.

DEADLINE

January 12, 2016

PRIZES

Winner of the “L’Iris D’Or” receives title of “Sony World Photography Awards Photographer of The Year”

USD\$25,000

cash prize, 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.

ENTRY FEES

none

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.

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

Getty Images staff photographer [John Moore](#) took the coveted L’Iris D’Or award with his stunning work on the Ebola epidemic in Liberia. “The World Photography Organization very actively promotes the Sony Awards on social media platforms, so they really do bring wide exposure to the work. Plus, the exhibition of all the winners’ work at Somerset House in London in very well done and drew huge crowds. I would recommend this competition to all photographers who want to highlight their work.”

VERDICT

A huge cash prize, plus gear, plus an exhibition, plus travel and expenses to the awards—there really isn’t much not to like about this contest.



© John Moore

Istanbul Photo Awards

Turkish-based Anadolu news agency sponsored the first contest in 2014, attracting a who's who of photojournalism with rich cash prizes. Ahmet Sell, the Visual News Editor-in-Chief [told TIME](#) that despite a strong visual culture, there isn't a contest in the region to help promote photography.

DEADLINE

January 31, 2016

PRIZES

USD \$8,000

for photo of the year, plus four categories each with 1st (\$8,000), 2nd (\$3,000) and 3rd (\$1,500) prizes.

ENTRY FEES

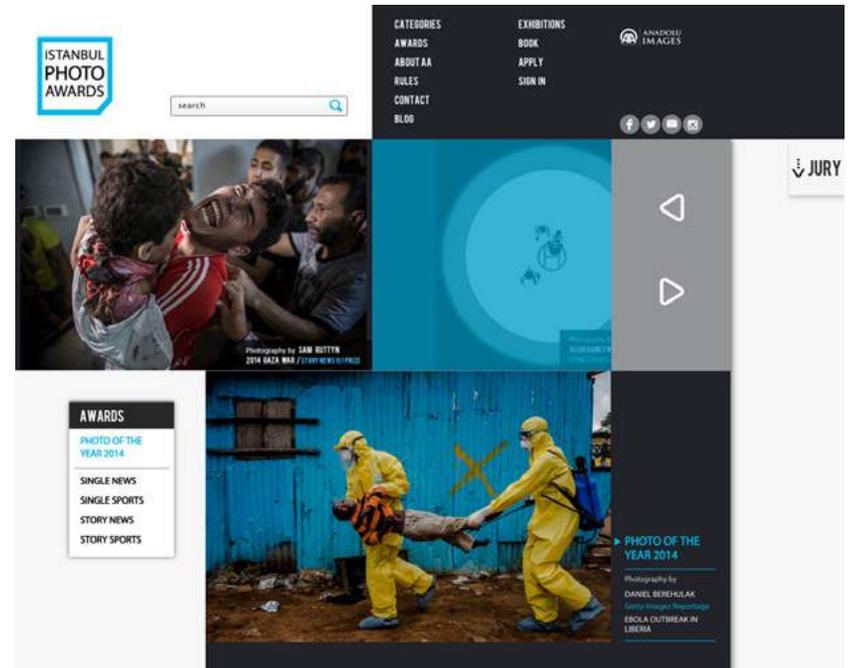
none

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Gallery exhibition (last year's winners were displayed at the Izmin Adnan Menderes Airport)

VERDICT

Although a newcomer, the Istanbul Photo Awards have created immediate legitimacy by providing a large prize purse. If the prize money continues, we see no reason why this contest couldn't continue to attract some of the best in the business.



© Mads Nissen

WPPI 16x20 Print Competition

If you still believe in prints, the WPPI's Awards of Excellence 16x20 Print Competition is one of the few that still caters to the analog medium in 8 divisions that span 30 different categories. Images are juried and receive Honors of Excellence points, which translate into different distinction awards. For many portrait and wedding photographers, these awards provide credibility in a highly unregulated market. And unlike many other contests, the judging is open to observers, providing a level of feedback that is rare.

DEADLINE

Early February

PRIZES

USD \$2,000

Grand Prize, full pass to WPPI, one year Photo+ Membership

ENTRY FEES

Print submission:

\$45 (members)

\$65 (non-members)

Album submission:

\$50 (members),

\$65 (non-members)

In-camera Artistry:

\$20 (members),

\$30 (non-members)

Filmmaking:

\$50 (members),

\$70 (non-members)

PROMISED EXPOSURE

All winners are published in Rangefinder magazine and online, and exhibited in Vegas during WPPI.

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Luke Edmonson](#) took 1st place in the In Camera Artistry Division in 2015 feels the print competition gives a rare level of feedback. “I had the opportunity to listen in while the judges were discussing my print and having 5 skilled set of eyes discussing not only the idea but also the actual execution in its printed form, opened my eyes to see flaws within the print I had missed looking at it on my own.” [Leigh Demshar](#), who took 2nd place in the Premiere category in 2015, was thrilled to see her work hung at WPPI. But the win didn't necessarily translate into more work. “Perhaps it resulted in more of an appreciation for my work, and the ability to command a higher price. But with pet photography, at least in Cleveland, it's still a struggle for people to understand why that matters.”

VERDICT

There are other organizations that run print competitions with a points-based system that translate into different accolades. But no one does it on the scale of WPPI. The transparency of judging is refreshing in the world of largely opaque photo contests.



© Luke Edmonson

Sigma Delta Chi Awards

The Society of Professional Journalists sponsors this annual award which includes breaking news, feature story and sports photography categories. The organization itself isn't large with 7,500 members (and is a mix of writers, broadcast journalists, photographers, cartoonists and more), but the contest is open to anyone who has had a photo published in print or online media.

DEADLINE

February 5, 2016

PRIZES

Award plaque and certificate

ENTRY FEES

\$60 per entry (SPJ Members),

\$100 per entry (non-SPJ)

PROMISED EXPOSURE

none

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

Former *Naples Daily News* photographer [Dania Maxwell](#) won a feature photography award for her story on an 11-year old boy with brain cancer. “Most of the contests I enter focus on photography and I realize that it is one out of many ways to tell a story. I respect Sigma Delta Chi for recognizing all sorts of methods—voice, video, writing, photography, graphics and drawing.” Maxwell’s words echo that of past winner [Kelvin Ma](#) who said, “Being able to see how your work measures up to others in the field in different disciplines is a valuable experience.”

VERDICT

The promise of a plaque offers little to offset the large entry fee. We acknowledge that this contest is mainly designed for recognition within a trade organization, but still, the lack of prizes is unfortunate.



© Dania Edmonson

Feature Shoot Emerging Photography Awards

Since 2008, the well-respected Feature Shoot website has featured the work of emerging and established photographers around the world. And despite its name, the Feature Shoot Emerging Photography Awards are open to anyone over the age of 21. The modest cash prize probably helps self-select emerging artists, but the potential exposure via the website is real, and has been a launch pad for many artists.

DEADLINE

February 15, 2016

PRIZES

\$500

camera equipment, expert printing of work by Ken Allen Studios

ENTRY FEES

\$20 fee for up to 5 images

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Gallery show at United Photo Industries in Brooklyn, NY

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

Jiehao Su, who was one of the overall winners in 2015, said, “I was honored and humbled to receive the Grand Prize for my project Borderland, a work to rebuild my self-awareness through an autobiographical portrait of my homeland -- China. I am grateful for the \$2500 prize and the opportunity to share my work at a 3-person show in New York. I definitely encourage all aspiring young photographers to submit to this wonderful competition!”

VERDICT

For the emerging photographer, finding good vehicles to be “discovered” can be vexing. Although the prize money isn’t significant, we like Feature Shoot’s track record of showcasing talent that might otherwise go unnoticed.



© Jiehao Su

feature shoot 
EMERGING PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

Barcelona International Photography Awards

Galería Valid Foto launched the inaugural year of the BIPA with no restrictions on who could enter, or the types of photography that could be submitted. Its stated goal is to “showcasing international contemporary photography and forming collaborative links between countries and photographic communities.”

DEADLINE

Late February

.....

PRIZES

Potential representation by
Galería Valid Foto BCN

.....

ENTRY FEES

\$50 fee per portfolio

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition at the Galería Valid Foto in Barcelona & at
DOCfield Festival, published on LensCulture.

VERDICT

The exhibition at the DOCfield Festival will certainly
generate eyeballs for the winners, but the high entry fee
and lack of prizes makes the current incarnation difficult
to recommend.



Wildlife Photographer of the Year

The UK Natural History Museum sponsors the annual Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition 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.

DEADLINE

Late February

PRIZES

£10,000

plus trophy and personalised certificate

ENTRY FEES

£30.00

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition at London's Natural History Museum before touring more than 60 cities around the world.

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Richard Peters](#), winner of the Urban category, calls the contest the “Oscars” of the wildlife photography industry. “Every step lets you know this competition deserves the respect it commands.” His wins over the years have led to more work, and Peters says, “Because the exhibition is so well known, and travels the globe, it puts your name in front of a lot of eyes and that increased exposure is definitely reflected in your inbox over time.”

VERDICT

The monetary prize alone would be enough to warrant our recommendation. But the contest's reputation and guaranteed exposure make this a no-brainer. This is one of the most widely respected contests in photography.



© Richard Peters

PDN Photo Annual

The PDN Photo Annual awards the best in photography, featuring winning images in ten different categories ranging from editorial assignments, photojournalism, portraiture, advertising, photo books, student work and fine art. Of the many contests that PDN runs throughout the year, the Photo Annual is arguably the most prestigious and most widely anticipated. Exposure through the print magazine as well as an increasingly well-designed website virtually ensures that influential photo editors and buyers will see the winners' work.

DEADLINE

February

.....

PRIZES

\$15,000 Arnold Newman Prize for New Directions in Photographic Portraiture

\$1,000 The Epson Creativity Award of and an Epson printer

The Marty Forscher Fellowship Fund cash award to one professional and one student winner

\$1,500 The PDN Publisher's Choice Award of and a one-page promo in PDN

.....

ENTRY FEES

\$45 for a single entry

\$55 per series

\$25 per entry for special student rate

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Winning images published in PDN's Photo Annual issue (sent to 5,000+ creatives) and pdnonline.com's gallery archive; "work seen by top photo industry judges."

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Nancy Borowick](#) won the prestigious Arnold Newman Prize and is a strong advocate of the contest. "So many amazing things have come as a result of the award such as the development of two upcoming exhibitions, exposure to a wider photo community, new meaningful relationships, and the list goes on." Because so many editors and buyers are familiar with the contest, Borowick notes, "the award helped to give me and my work credibility, on a large platform, which in turn opened up many new doors."

VERDICT

Not all the categories are of equal stature, but the Photo Annual is one contest that photo editors and buyers always tell us matters to them.



© Nancy Borowick

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.” More specifically, any professional photographer can enter any non-manipulated image for a chance to win a ton of cash and a Leica camera.

DEADLINE

March

PRIZES

€25,000

Leica M and lens

ENTRY FEES

none

NOTES

Photo must be taken in past calendar year; only one entry person; Professional photographers only

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Winning images published in PDN’s Photo Annual issue (sent to 5,000+ creatives) and pdnonline.com’s gallery archive; “work seen by top photo industry judges.”

VERDICT

You can complain about the price of a Leica, but you can’t complain about the prizes in this contest. The diversity of winners (both in terms of geography and subject matter) keep this contest interesting and relevant.



Communication Arts Photography Competition

The Communication Arts Photography Competition is one of the most prestigious competitions for creativity in photography. Judges range from distinguished designers, art directors and photographers around the world. Photographers can submit their work to categories including advertising, books and multimedia.

DEADLINE

March 11, 2016

PRIZES

Award of Excellence trophy

ENTRY FEES

\$40 for a single entry

\$80 per series

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Publication in *Communication Arts Photography Annual*

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

DC-based photographer [Stephen Voss](#) believes the audience for *Communication Arts* separates it from other contests, and the relatively high cost of participation is worthwhile. “Having my photos featured in the *Communication Arts Photography Annual* is one of the few promotional things I’ve done that has directly led to new work. I reach out to old and new clients on my own with postcards, emails and other ways, and I think for new clients, seeing my name in the Annual has added a level of legitimacy to my work and made them more inclined to reach out.”

VERDICT

Communication Arts is a highly respected publication for graphic arts, and winning the contest will undoubtedly provide exposure to photo editors, buyers and creative directors. However, the entry fee is significant and there are no prizes beyond the accolades. Worst yet, there’s no way to see the winners without buying the printed Annual or subscribing online.



© Stephen Voss

GDT European Wildlife Photographer of the Year

The Society of German Nature Photographers hosts the 2nd largest wildlife photography competition in Europe. Entrants must reside in Europe and be members of GDT.

DEADLINE

Mid-March

PRIZES

€3,000

Overall Winner + travel/
accommodations for awards
ceremony

ENTRY FEES

€30 for a single entry

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition at the International Nature Photography Festival (GDT) in Lünen, Germany.

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Richard Peters](#), the 2015 GDT European Wildlife Photographer of the Year, says that although the contest is restricted to European residents, it's still an important contest that is "considered as not only the second biggest competition of its type, but by many, as the one that leads the way in showcasing the more creative side of nature photography."

VERDICT

Although the contest doesn't receive the worldwide exposure of others, the prize money is still solid and contest is highly respected within the wildlife community.



© Richard Peters

PX3

Now celebrating its 10th year, the well-regarded “Prix de la Photographie, Paris” promotes photography from around the world in a six categories (advertising, photojournalism, book, fine art, nature and portraiture)

DEADLINE

March 30, 2016

PRIZES

USD \$5,000

(professional)

USD \$2,000

(non-professional)

ENTRY FEES

\$30 per photo

\$50 per series

PROMISED EXPOSURE

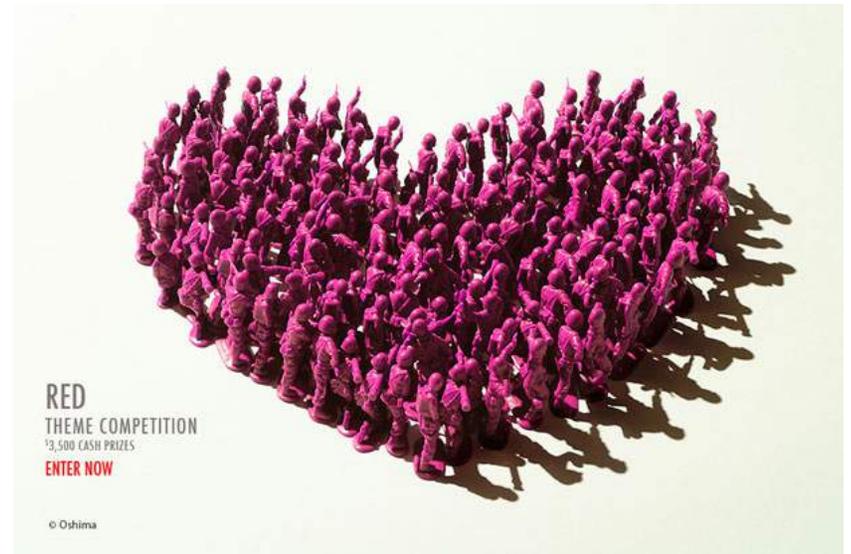
Winner’s exhibition in Paris, published in Px3 Annual Book

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Tim Llewellyn](#) was a past winner of the People’s Choice Award for Professional Advertising and says that entering the contest brought him greater exposure in the European market.

VERDICT

The well-regarded international competition has attracted a cadre of photographers like Sebastiano Tomada, Dilip Bhatia and John Keatley in a variety of categories. The prize money is good, but we’d like to see the competition provide more press for their winners.



iPhone Photography Awards

If the iPhone or iPad is your only camera, this might be the competition for you. Now entering its 9th year, the awards place no restriction on subject matter or post processing. Many of the entrants use clip-on lenses and post processing apps to enhance their images.

DEADLINE

March 31, 2016

PRIZES

Award title + TBD prize

ENTRY FEES

\$3.50 per image (discounts available)

NOTES

iPhone only

PROMISED EXPOSURE

none

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[David Craik](#) was the Grand Prize Winner in 2015, and despite the win, he has some hesitations about the contest. “Like all competitions, seeing your image get exposure, win things, get positive comments back, is all great. However the chances of winning are tiny, and it could get costly trying to win.” He also notes that the initial press release used an unedited version of the image, which was subsequently distributed to partner companies. “As such, I’m unlikely to enter again.”

VERDICT

The entry fee is nominal, so the contest could hardly be construed as a ruse to generate cash. On the other hand, the main prize is the self-proclaimed “prestigious IPPA Photographer of the Year Award.” Still, the 2015 winners were featured in TIME Lightbox.



© David Craik Photography

Red Bull Illume Image Quest

Energy drinker maker Red Bull invests heavily into adventure sports and it's athletes but every three years the company sponsors the Red Bull Illume Image Quest contest to honor those behind the camera and find the best action and adventure sports photography in 11 categories, including a new mobile category.

DEADLINE

March 31, 2016

PRIZES

The Overall Winner will walk away with a Yodobashi voucher to the value of €40,000, which can be redeemed for any number of the company's massive selection of consumer goods. Sony will also award the various winners with photography gear worth over €60,000. The prizes will include cameras such as the Sony ILCE-A7RII or the Sony DSC-RX1RII along with a variety of accessories and lenses. Additional prizes from partners broncolor, tamrac and G-technology will be announced soon.

ENTRY FEES

none

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Two-year traveling nighttime photo exhibition to capitals and cultural hubs around the world until, worldwide media coverage and high-quality coffee table book.

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

Photographer [Scott Serfas](#) was a top 10 finalist in the Illumination category in 2013. When asked whether he would enter the Red Bull Illume contest again, he says "100% yes. I love the format and I think it really helps shed some light on what it is we do and how hard it really is to produce these images year in year out." "When I received the award, it was a huge insane overnight boost to my career!" says 2013 finalist Morgan Maassen. "It put my work in front of a lot of new eyes, especially outside the industry. It helped magnify my work to a bunch of new worlds like finance companies and editorial publications." Morgan says he's had instant career success after winning the Red Bull Illume Lifestyle category in 2013: "Overnight it really transformed my whole operation, my career, my artwork."

VERDICT

The Red Bull PR machine generates a ton of publicity for the contest and contest winners, and winners are guaranteed eyeballs in a variety of heavily trafficked media outlets. Prizes include a sweet cache of photo gear and the finalist images are honoured at a big Oscar-style Winners Award Ceremony.



© Scott Serfas

Big Picture Natural World Photography Competition

The California Academy of Sciences sponsors this nature photo contest to “celebrate and illustrate the rich diversity of life on Earth.” Photographers can enter images in seven different categories including the new “Photo Essay: Coral Reefs” to highlight one of the most pressing ecological challenges of our time.

DEADLINE

March 31, 2016

PRIZES

USD \$5,000

grand prize

USD \$1,000

category prizes

ENTRY FEES

\$25 (up to 10 photos)

\$15 for photo essay category

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibit at the California Academy of Sciences

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Beth Watson](#), winner of the Aquatic division, had many words of praise for the organization of the contest, awards ceremony and the cash prize. Unfortunately, the win didn’t translate to more work, but she says of the nascent contest, “In my estimation, The Big Picture Competition will gain in popularity each year.”

VERDICT

The quality of the competition is high for this increasingly prestigious competition. We like the fact that the rights grab is limited to promotion of the contest and for a fixed duration of five years. That makes the increased entry fee easier to swallow.



Beth Watson | First Place 2015
BigPictureCompetition.org

© Beth Watson

NPPA Best of Photojournalism

The Best of Photojournalism (BOP) competitions are hosted by the [National Press Photographers Association](#) (NPPA). These annual competitions recognize the best in the four categories of still photojournalism, video photojournalism, photojournalism editing and multimedia photojournalism.

DEADLINE

March

PRIZES

Winner's plaque

ENTRY FEES

none

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Published in the NPPA's Best of Photojournalism issue of *News Photographer* magazine

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

The Washington Post's [Jahi Chikwendiu](#), winner of the 2015 Photojournalist of the Year (large markets), says the entry process is simple and free, but "The actual prizes for winners are a bit lackluster, given the international scope of the contest. I won large market photographer of the year for [my] 2014 [portfolio], for example, and received a plaque. I'm not complaining, but a little cha-ching prize is always a good thing." Still, Chikwendiu acknowledges the industry prestige that comes with such a well-known contest.

VERDICT

The NPPA is a highly regarded organization for visual journalists, and winning a prize all but ensures that photo editors will see the work even though the winners no longer appear in a hardcover book. The lack of prizes is unfortunate, and the contest will play second fiddle to the richer prizes that has come to typify non-US-based photojournalism awards.



© Jahi Chikwendiu/Washington Post

Kuala Lumpur International Photo Awards

While many photo contests allow a range of categories for entries, the Kuala Lumpur International Photo Awards focus solely on contemporary portraiture. And although the prize isn't well-known, the winners have talent to rival any contest.

DEADLINE

April

PRIZES

USD \$4,000

+ trophy

ENTRY FEES

\$15 per image

(discounts and early-bird available)

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition in Kuala Lumpur

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Tamás Schild](#), Top Prize winner in the Open Category, says the award “is a well organized up-and-coming contest, treating the winners nicely,” and that the win triggered a “significant increase in my website traffic.”

[Jordi Pizarro](#), winner of the Special Select Juror Prize in 2015, believes the contest is well-organized and financed saying “they pay for the travel expenses for attend the ceremony in a nice gallery in Kuala Lumpur...[the prize] money, for sure, always helps to keep working in your projects.” But he agrees that the awards lack the exposure that other well-established contests have.

VERDICT

The fee is nominal, and the prizes are significant. If portraiture is your thing, there's no reason not to enter this contest.



© Jordi Pizarro

Astronomy Photographer of the Year

Hosted by the [Royal Museums Greenwich](#) in Greenwich, England, the *Astronomy Photography of the Year* competition awards great images of the sky and space. Now in its 5th year, categories include 'Earth and Space', 'Our Solar System', 'Deep Space' and 'Young Astronomy Photographer of the Year'.

DEADLINE

April

PRIZES

£2,500

ENTRY FEES

none

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition at the Royal Observatory Greenwich in the UK; published in the *Astronomy Photographer of the Year* book.

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Luc Jamet's](#) "Eclipse Totality over Sassendalen" took the Skyscapes and Overall winner prizes at the 2015 Awards. Although the win didn't translate into additional work, Jamet is content because most of the entrants aren't full-time professionals. "The prizes were quite substantial, in my opinion. The amount granted to the winner of each category and that for the overall winner sound hefty to me. Plus, the winning and shortlisted photos are nicely exposed in a series of formats: a gallery at Royal Observatory, Greenwich, the contest website, an official book and an issue of *Astronomy Now* magazine."

VERDICT

The entry process is clunky and the rights grab doesn't favor the photographer. But the prize money and press exposure has grown over the past year, and there really isn't any other game in town for astrophotography.



© Luc Jamet

Nikon Small World Photomicrography Contest

The Nikon Small World Photomicrography Competition is regarded as the leading forum for showcasing life's beauty and complexity as seen through the light microscope. The competition is open to anyone with an interest in microscopy and photography.

DEADLINE

April 30, 2016

PRIZES

USD \$3,000

towards Nikon equipment

ENTRY FEES

none

PROMISED EXPOSURE

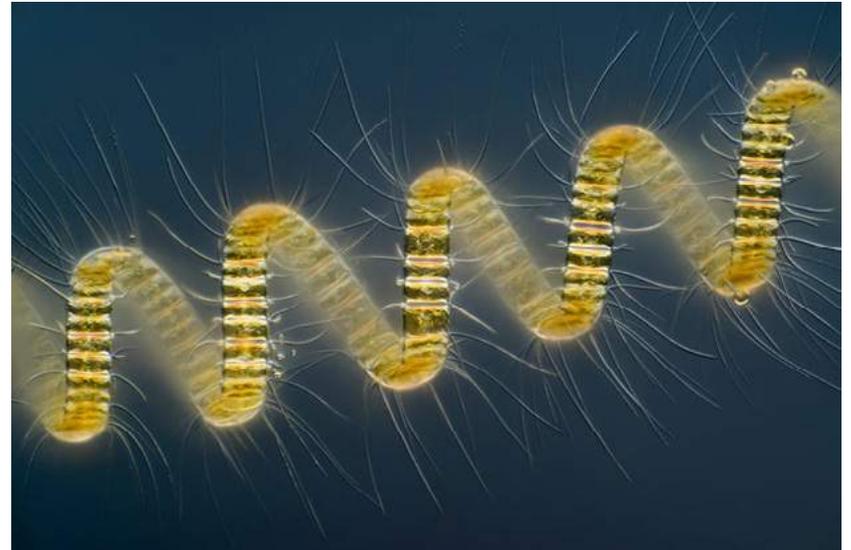
Small World Exhibit travels throughout North America at selected museums and centers for science.

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

Multi-year winner [Wim van Egmond](#) appreciates that the Nikon contest generates awareness for microphotography. When determining which contests to enter, he cautions photographers to “make sure that it is a real contest, with a good reputation.”

VERDICT

The contest continues to be the perfect example of how to run a niche contest with strong prizes and guaranteed exposure. We bemoan the loss of cash prizes for gear, but you'd do worse than to have some high quality Nikon equipment.



© Wim van Egmond

On the Move International Award

The Cortona On the Move International Photography Festival in Tuscany uses a beautiful backdrop of medieval architecture to promote an increasingly popular photo circuit destination. The Festival sponsors the On the Move International Award in conjunction with Consorzio Vino Chianti—the Chianti winegrowers syndicate.

DEADLINE

May

PRIZES

€4,000

towards Nikon equipment

ENTRY FEES

none

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition at next year's festival

VERDICT

If the thrill of seeing your winning photos in a medieval town isn't exciting enough, we're pretty sure the cash prize will tickle your fancy.

IAFOR Documentary Photography Award

The new award seeks to identify and support emerging photojournalists (applicants must be younger than 31 years old or enrolled in a part-time or full-time program) and documentary photographers. Over 150 photographers from 30 countries submitted work for the 2015 contest that had the theme of “power.”

DEADLINE

Early June

PRIZES

£1,000

cash award, added to list of nominees for World Press Photo Joop Swart Masterclass, MediaStorm workshop

ENTRY FEES

none

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition in the UK and Japan

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Romain Champalaune](#) took third place in the 2015 Awards, and praised the “perfect” organization and the opportunity that it brought to showcase his work outside of France. The win didn’t lead to new commissions, however, an outcome he blames partially on himself (“I did not advertise a lot...I am not very active in social media”) and on the newness of the contest.

VERDICT

Given the low number of applicants and the relatively rich cash award, this is a great contest for young photojournalists to sink their teeth into—even if the level of exposure hasn’t reached a critical peak yet. The 2015 winners encompassed a wide range of subject matter and photographic styles, suggesting that the judges have a broad appetite for documentary photography.



© Romain Champalaune

National Geographic Traveler Photo Contest

One of the best brands in photography also has one of the most popular contests. Judges sifted through over 18,000 entries showcasing landscapes, portraits, diverse cultures and surprising moments all over the world to award ten top prizes in 2015.

DEADLINE

June 30

PRIZES

Eight-Day National Geographic Photo Expedition: Costa Rica and the Panama Canal for Two (USD\$13,980 value)

ENTRY FEES

\$15 per entry

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Featured in *National Geographic Traveler* and online

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

Mexican photographer [Anuar Patjane](#) won last year's grand prize and has been thrilled with the new opportunities resulting from the win. "The amount of request for my images increased exponentially and many work proposals arrived directly related to the contest and this new exposure. The surprising thing for me was that one winning image pulls the rest of your work and it is not just the winning photograph that gets all the exposure; it is your message and your work as a whole the one that gets it."

VERDICT

We're a little on the fence about this recommendation. The rights grab is restricted to promotion of the contest, but includes use in books and downloadable wallpaper from the NatGeo website. The brand has unmistakable prestige and the allure of an 8-day cruise might appeal to the average entrant, but do we really have to give the winning photo away for free as desktop wallpaper?



© Anuar Patjane

Black & White Spider Awards

The same people who produce the International Color Awards go full desaturation to bring you the Black & White Spider Awards.

DEADLINE

late June

PRIZES

winner medal

ENTRY FEES

\$35 Professional

\$30 Amateur

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Published in Black & White Awards Journal

VERDICT

Any contest that only offers a medal as a prize is going to run afoul of our recommendation—particularly when the entry fee is \$35. This is nothing more than a cash grab, and provides little benefit to the winners.



Epson International Pano Awards

Epson sponsors this contest which bills itself as the largest competition for panoramic photography. Now entering its 7th year, the contest attracts thousands of entrants from around the world in three categories.

DEADLINE

Mid-July

PRIZES

USD\$2,000

and an Epson Stylus Pro 7900, trophy, Triple Scoop Music voucher (open awards);

\$5000

Jeff Mitchum Fine Art Prize

ENTRY FEES

\$20 per image (open)

\$16 per image (amateur)

NOTES

Amateurs (anyone earning <\$20,000) + Pros

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibited at The Digital Show in Melbourne

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Darren Moore](#), winner of the 2015 Open Award, praises the “clear and precise” instructions on how to prepare and upload photos. The added exposure translated into sales. “Online, many of the the photo news sites and blogs feature the winners, I noticed a significant increase in traffic to my website and some extra sales of my prints since the results of the competition were announced.”

VERDICT

Like the Nikon Small World Contest, the Epson Pano Awards serve a very specific niche and offer a healthy prize with very photographer-friendly terms.



© Darren Moore

Photo Camera Clara

The Camera Clara award is strictly for unpublished work taken with large format view cameras, and seeks to reward the slow process that is required through large format photography.

DEADLINE

July

PRIZES

€6,000

ENTRY FEES

none

PROMISED EXPOSURE

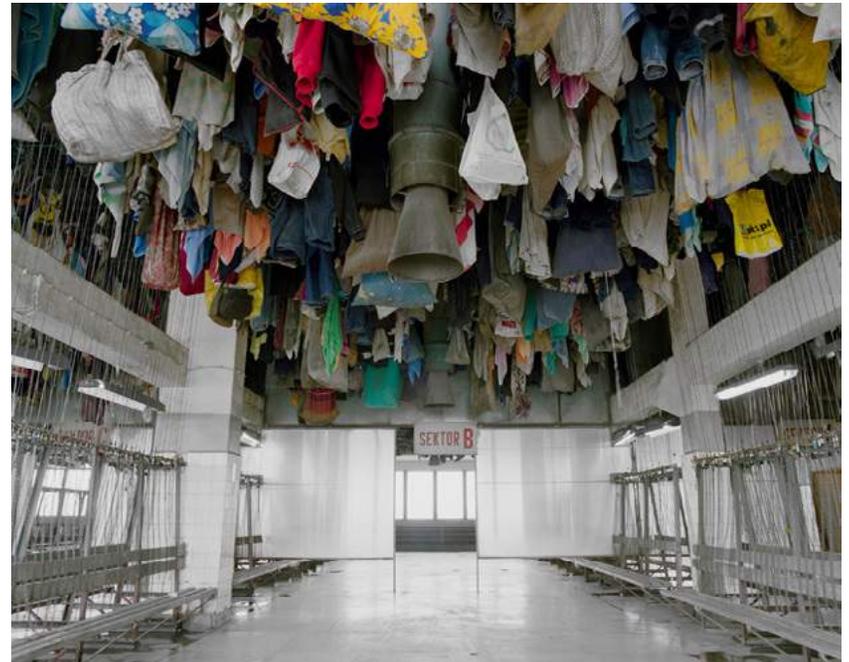
Potential exhibition

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Darek Fortas](#) was awarded the prize in 2014 for his work entitled *Changing Rooms*. Fortas was particularly pleased with the composition of the jury, which “consists of the finest and most influential people in the field of fine art photography in France. It opened up a lot of avenues including selling the work to public institutions and private collectors, but what matters the most for me is the network and access to feedback, so that I can develop as an artist.”

VERDICT

In the digital age, it's rare to find anyone touting the benefits of large format photography, let alone handing out a huge monetary prize. But Camera Clara does just that, and the winners' work reflects a quietness afforded by the deliberate and slow process.



© Darek Fortas

International Photography Award

The International Photography Award (IPA) is an annual competition for professional, non-professional and student photographers. Its goal is to award achievements, discover new and emerging talent, and promote a general appreciation of photography.

DEADLINE

August

PRIZES

USD\$10,000 for International Photographer of the Year

\$5,000 for Discovery of the Year

\$5,000 for Deeper Perspective of the Year

\$2,500 for Moving Image Photographer of the Year

ENTRY FEES

\$35 per image (professional)

\$25 per image (non-professional)

\$15 per image (student)

PROMISED EXPOSURE

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

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Kristina Varaksina](#) took first place in the Advertising: Beauty category, and although she's received plenty of exposure, it hasn't translated into more work...yet. "The exposure definitely was great. I've had several people (photo magazines and blogs) contacted me since the results came out. Many new people have followed me on IG and FB." Still, she's bullish on photo contests because "you never know when your potential client will see you."

VERDICT

The entry fee could be a little lower, but \$10,000 is pretty sweet bait for entering the IPA. Winners have been previously published on websites like BuzzFeed and EYEMAZING. Plus, the exhibition and press release provide a chance to get a good number of eyeballs on your work.



© Berry Marry

Moran Contemporary Photographic Prize

Founded in 1988 in celebration of Australia's bicentennial, the Moran Prize is Australia's richest contest with a AUD\$50,000 grand prize. The only stipulation for entry is that the photographer must be an Australian citizen.

DEADLINE

Late August

PRIZES

AUD\$50,000

all finalists receive \$1,000

ENTRY FEES

\$25 per entry

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition at Juniper Hall in Paddington NSW + traveling exhibition

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Suzanne McCorkell](#), winner of the 2014 prize, speaks highly of the generous prize and the efforts of the Moran Foundation to promote art within Australia. “[The award] has certainly promoted me as an artist within the Photographic Community, for which I am grateful. I would recommend entering any Photographic Competition to challenge yourself to think outside the square and grow as a Photographer. It is not about notoriety, more a great opportunity for self improvement.”

VERDICT

Although the contest is limited to Australian citizens, it is a fantastic example of an incredibly well-funded competition with restricted rights demands. Whether or not image buyers and editors are paying attention to the relatively new contest is the only question mark, but surely the visibility of the contest will improve with time.



© Suzanne McCorkell

Travel Photographer of the Year

The Travel Photographer of the Year (TPOTY) and the Royal Geographic Society have partnered to produce one of the premier travel photography competitions, attracting both amateurs and professionals. The competition awards a diversity of travel imagery, including a glimpse at various culture, cityscapes, landscapes, wildlife and more.

DEADLINE

early October

PRIZES

£2,500

trophy, Plastic Sandwich portfolio case for Travel Photographer of the Year

ENTRY FEES

£15 (portfolio, new talent, HD short)

£7.50 (one shot, smart shot)

free (young TPOTY)

PROMISED EXPOSURE

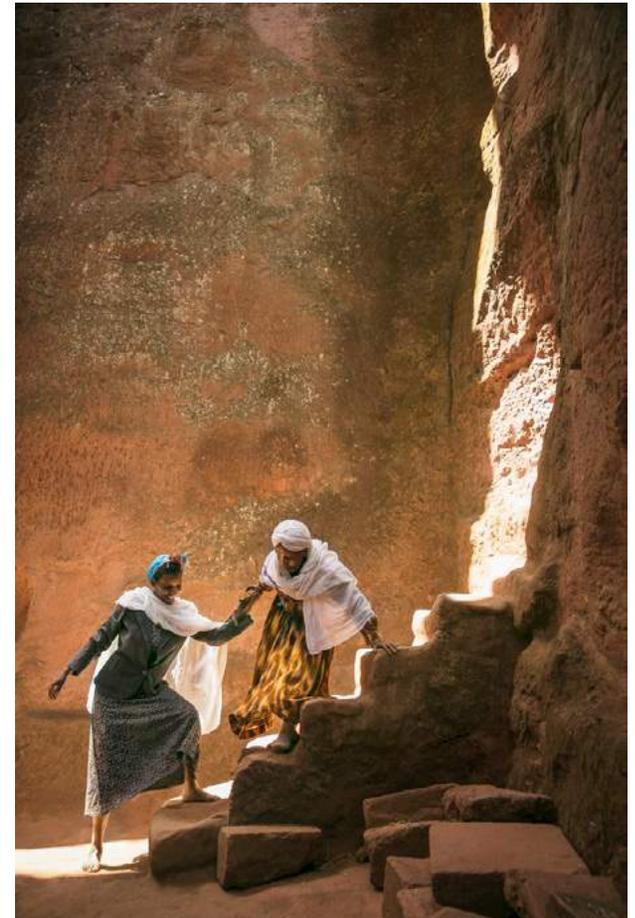
Exhibition at the Royal Geographic Society in London

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

2014 Travel Photographer of the Year, [Philip Lee Harvey](#), wowed the judges with two different portfolios shot in Ethiopia and Namibia. The exposure has positively affected his business. “It has lead to a lot of global exposure and thus helps build people’s awareness of my work. I have certainly felt the TPOTY effect on the amount of commissions offered to me.”

VERDICT

TPOTY is the UK’s well-known equivalent of the National Geographic competition. The prizes are decent and an exhibition at the Royal Geographic Society in London attracts tens of thousands of visitors per year.



© Philip Lee Harvey

International Color Awards

The International Color Awards is the “leading international award honoring color photography”—whatever that means. The annual contest showcases the best professional and amateur photographers during a red carpet annual event called the Photoshow—whatever that is.

DEADLINE

November 15, 2015

PRIZES

USD\$1,500

for Photographer of the Year

ENTRY FEES

\$35 per image (professional)

\$30 per image (amateur)

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Publication in The Journal

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

Photographer of the Year, [Frank Wartenberg](#), won for his humorous portrait entitled “Ermangildo Mask,” and says, “The cash prizes are surely attractive, but for me cash prizes are less important than the publication in a nicely edited book. Unfortunately, The International Color Awards’ Journal is only an online publication, I hope they’ll issue a print edition in the future, as well.” The prize led to some interesting leads, but he says, “I don’t recall winning leading concretely to a job.”

VERDICT

If anything positive can be said about the International Color Awards, it’s that they are fantastic self-marketers. Year after year, they convince thousands of photographers to pony up \$35 to enter a contest that generates almost no benefit for the winners and offers scant prizes and virtually no exposure.



© Frank Wartenberg

National Geographic Photo Contest

The National Geographic Photo Contest rallies amateur and professional photographers from all over the world to submit their work to three categories: people, place and nature. In 2014, the contest received 22,000 entries from photographers in over 150 different countries—all of which you can see online before the judging takes place.

DEADLINE

November 16, 2015

PRIZES

USD\$10,000

Grand Prize Winner + a trip to the annual National Geographic Photography Seminar

\$2,500 for each category winner

ENTRY FEES

\$15 per photo

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Publication on National Geographic website

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Nicole Cambré](#) took home 1st place in the Nature division with her photo entitled “The Great Migration.” She’s pleased with the win, but maintains a very practical viewpoint about the benefits. “The prize (\$2500 for a category winner—30% US taxes so in reality only \$1750) is good but what is more important is the international exposure and the press the award brings. The only downside is that everyone focuses on the winning image and forgets the rest of my work.” Still, the win has led to more opportunities for her photography.

VERDICT

It’s National Geographic, it pays a ton of cash (unlike National Geographic Traveler), and you get to go to the Photography Seminar which is one of the most interesting and inspiring gatherings not open to the general public.



© Nicole Cambré

Smithsonian Photo Contest

Photographers from 93 countries submitted over 26,000 images for the 12th annual contest. The Smithsonian contest is one of the few that requires a model release for images with recognizable faces.

DEADLINE

November 30, 2015

PRIZES

USD\$2,500

Grand Prize

\$2,500 for each category winner

ENTRY FEES

none

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Publication on Smithsonian website

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

Grand Prize winner [Pham Van Ty](#) believes entering the contest is a no-brainer. “When the entry fee is \$0, there is no reason to hesitate to enter the contest in order to receive the many worthwhile benefits which the contest brings to the winning image.” Ty, a graphic designer, received significant media coverage as a result of the win of women stitching a fishing net in his native Vietnam.

VERDICT

Smithsonian is a reputable magazine and the contest attracts some really stunning photography. But we still can't get behind the onerous rights grab which allows them to use the winning photos in ways that have nothing to do with the contest.



© Pham Van Ty

IACP Food Photography and Styling Awards

For the International Association of Culinary Professionals Food Photography and Styling Awards, you can submit in five categories: food photography, editorial/personal and commercial; food styling, editorial/personal and commercial; cause-based food photography.

DEADLINE

December 1, 2015- Midnight PST
January 19, 2016
(Contestants won't be able to complete entry form until December 1, 2015)

PRIZES

Prize package including one-year PhotoShelter Pro account

ENTRY FEES

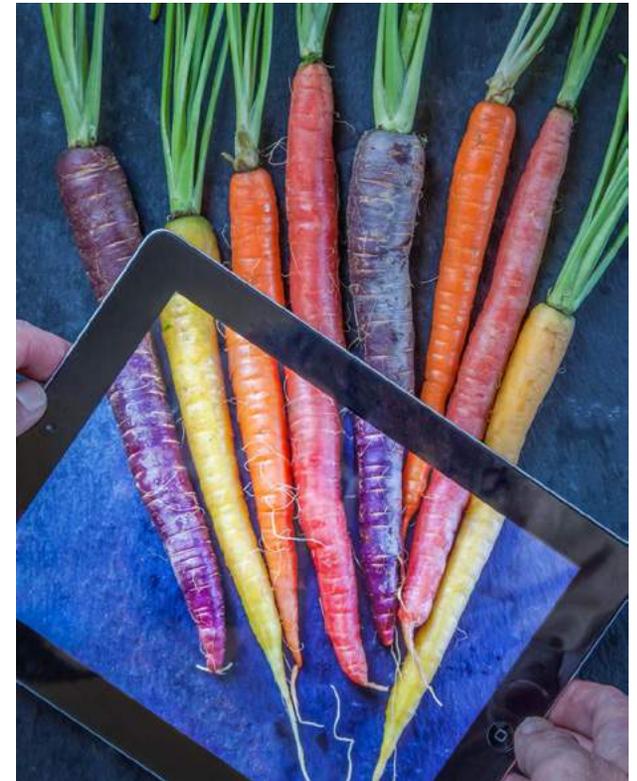
\$15 per image for IACP members, \$20 per image for non-members

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Finalists announced at NYC media event March 3, winners announced at awards ceremony during IACP annual conference April 3, Los Angeles. Full publicity campaign, in conjunction with IACP's other journalism awards. Presentation on IACP's website, with links to your portfolio. Exhibit in public spaces during Los Angeles conference.

VERDICT

This is the first year in which IACP is including the photography competition in its suite of well-respected and well-publicized awards (cookbooks, journalism, digital media). Exposure to judges will also be advantageous to food photographers as this year's panel includes Tina Ujlaki of Food and Wine magazine, Andy Harris of Jamie magazine, creative director Don Morris, and food stylist Susan Spungen.



© Irvin Lin

Aperture Portfolio Prize

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

December 2, 2015

PRIZES

USD\$3,000

ENTRY FEES

unknown

PROMISED EXPOSURE

Exhibition at Aperture Gallery

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

[Drew Nikonowicz](#), winner of the 2015 prize, believes the contest brings an incredible level of relevant exposure.

“This prize is worth submitting to even if you do not think you will win. This is a prize which people take very seriously, especially the people at Aperture who choose the winners.” Nikonowicz says that the win has led to “lot of new opportunities I would not have otherwise had access to at such an early stage in my career.”

VERDICT

If it wasn't Aperture, we'd have a hard time swallowing the “membership in lieu of an entry fee” strategy, which ends up being more expensive than most contests. But it's hard to dispute the value of the brand and the important eyeballs that will see the work of the winners.



© Amy Elkins

I Shot It: The Best Photo Competition

In 2013, Leica majority shareholder Dr. Andreas Kaufmann, acquired a 25.1% stake in the “I Shot It” platform, which allows users to create an account, upload photos, and enter themed competitions including landscapes, wildlife, cats, dogs, and flowers. Each category has its own specialist judge who picks the winner.

DEADLINE

rolling

PRIZES

varies by category

ENTRY FEES

varies by category

PROMISED EXPOSURE

none

WHAT THE WINNERS SAY

Despite initially dismissing the contest, Melbourne-based newspaper photographer Alex Coppel decided to enter because there were “no strings attached” and he was able to enter older work. Much to his surprise, he ended up winning the black-and-white category and scored a Leica M Monochrom (value \$8,000). “I had absolutely no idea I would be selected as the winner and could not be more chuffed with the win...it has DEFINITELY made me more enthused to go and get creative. I produce a lot of work daily for the ‘brief’ of my ‘client’ although this has made me want to go and produce for me again, the way it should be for creative image makers.”

VERDICT

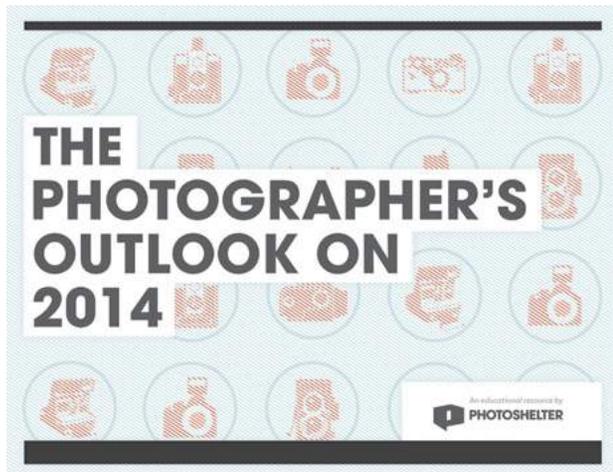
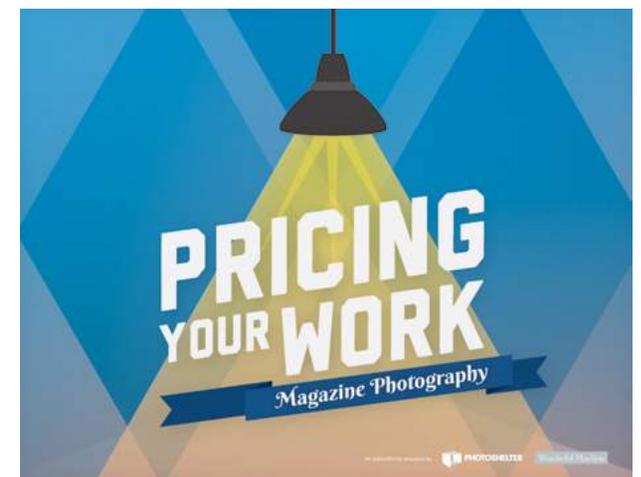
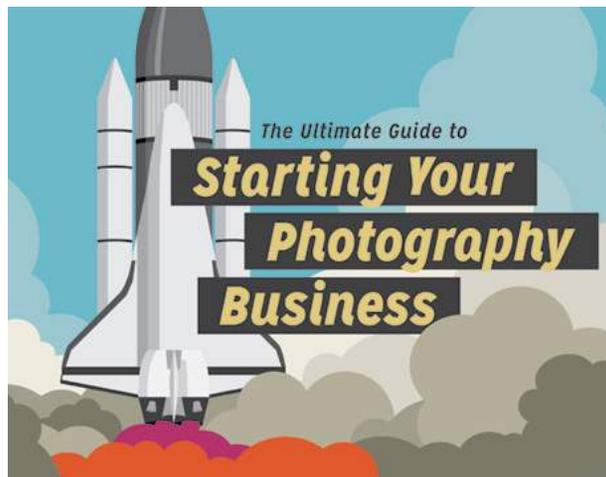
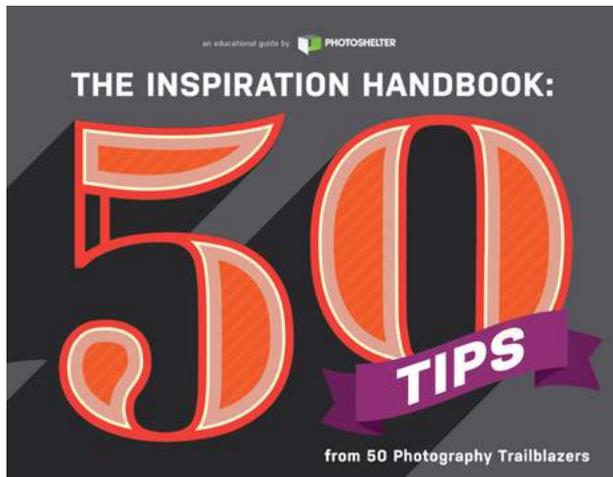
I Shot It is rather unique in the contest world with its rolling format, sliding entry fees, and variable prizes. The judging process is opaque and conducted by a single person per category, but the promise of winning anything from a Leica C (\$700 value) to a Leica M Monochrom (\$8000 value) is pretty enticing, and the entry periods are relatively short.



© Alex Coppel

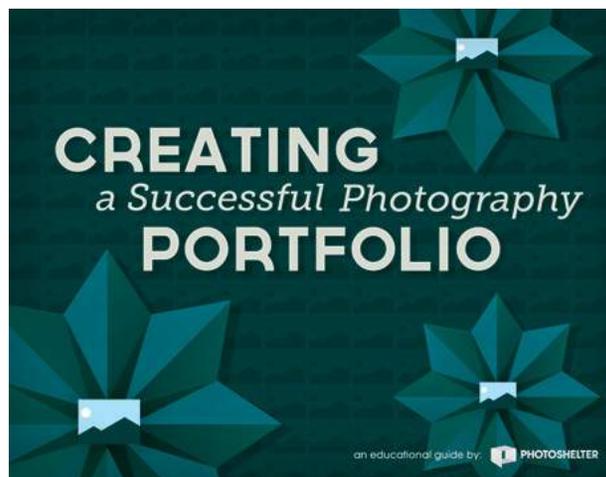
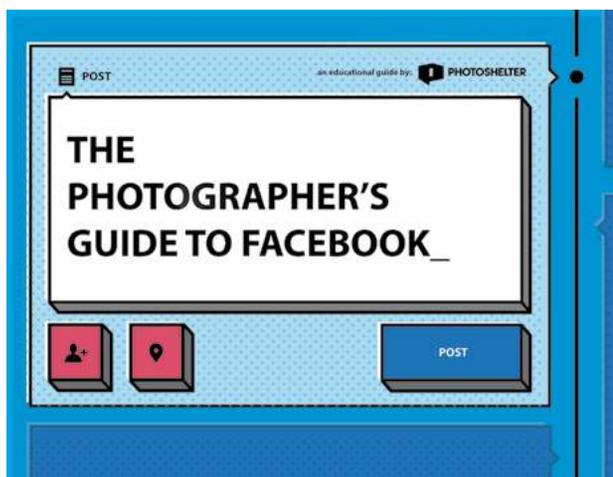
Conclusion

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? Do you have high regards for those who have won in the past? Make sure you read through the contest's Terms and Conditions, FAQs, plus look at previous winners' work to decide if it might be a good fit. Remember that some photo contests are better than others (hopefully our verdicts helped!). You'll want to align yourself with the competitions that are well-regarded and respected in the industry.



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