

ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST EVENT RULES
Revised March, 2008



a. Categories

Transparencies:

Transparency – Prototype or Model

Photo Prints:

Film Print – Prototype

Digitized Print – Prototype

Film or Digitized Print – Model

Snapshots:

Snapshot – Prototype or Model

Special Event:

Film or Digital Print or Transparency

- (1) The Special Event will be on a special subject prescribed by the photo contest chairperson and the winner to receive the Peter Abel Award.
- (2) Transparencies must be in standard 2" by 2" mounts and should be spotted in the lower left hand corner.
- (3) Film and Digitized Prints may be mounted on flat rigid cardboard (no folders or glass frames). Photo and/or mount may not exceed 12" x 16" (30 cm x 40 cm) in size. Minimum mount size is 8" x 10" (20cm x 25cm) and minimum print size is 5" x 7" (12cm x 18 cm).
- (4) Digitized Prints are defined as any print that has been taken with a digital camera or any picture scanned into a computer. All work to produce the final print and the original exposure or slide must have been done by the entrant personally.
- (5) The snapshot category shall be defined as any unmounted, straightforward print as obtained from your photofinisher in the standard sizes. Total picture area is not to exceed 24 square inches. Polaroid type pictures are perfectly acceptable.

b. Rules for Entry

- (1) Each member may submit up to ten (10) entries with up to five (5) in any one category.
- (2) Members entering Photo Prints or Snapshots must choose to compete in EITHER category. They may NOT enter both categories.
- (3) Entries may be submitted prior to the Model Contest Event at a time and place determined by the Photo Contest Chairperson, normally at the preceeding WMRC Meeting. Time and place are to be published in The Lantern.
- (4) Entries must be identified by the owner. Prints must have the owner's name on the back. Prints with names on the front will not be accepted. Slides should have the name on the mount.
- (5) Exposure of the original negative or slide must have been made by the entrant and shall not have won a first place award in any previous WMRC Photo Contest.

c. Judging Procedures

- (1) The Photo Contest Chairperson shall select a panel of at least three judges. Judges selected ideally should have both some ability in judging photographic techniques and an appreciation of the aims of model railroading.
- (2) Experience has indicated that the judging is best done on a group basis with the objective of eliminating the 'also-ran' photos early. The following judging system (called the Melbourne system) has been used in competitive camera club settings for many years.
- (3) For the transparency categories the process is to go through all the slides in a category one time to get an overview of the entries. The judges then go through the category again and each judge indicates whether a slide should stay or be eliminated. During this run through a positive vote from any one of the three judges will keep a slide in the running. This run through process is then repeated another time and this time it takes a positive vote from two of the three judges to keep a slide in. This run through process is repeated again and this time the finalists are chosen from those with positive votes from all the judges.
- (4) For the print categories the practice that has evolved is for each judge to go through the category individually to decide which photos he thinks should be included in the finals. The judges then get together to compare results. Any photos that have the support of all the judges are automatically in the finals. Any that have the support of only one or two judges are discussed and may be put in the finals if the judges agree.
- (5) At this point most photo contest should be down to the top 12 or so entries. The judges must review the photos or slides until they come to a consensus as to their order of finish. Usually this is a matter of considerable discussion and different teams of judges will likely produce different results. This is not surprising as photos are a very subjective medium.
- (6) Similarly after all the categories have been judged, the judges must go through the same judgment process to determine the Best-in-Show from amongst the First Place Award winners. Best-in-Show is then removed from its original category and the other winners moved up one place.

d. Judging Factors

As stated above and is evident to the experienced observer, photo contests are much more subjective than the model contest event. This is because a prize winning photo is perhaps more a matter of art and luck than execution of technique. Certainly the photographer is faced with more things that are beyond his control than the model builder.

Notwithstanding this subjectivity, there are some judging factors that are brought to bear by the experienced Photo Contest Judge. These will be given an appropriate, albeit intuitive, weighting as the judges on the panel come to their consensus.

- (1) **IMPACT:** This is best explained when a photo evokes comments such as 'I wish I'd taken that picture.' Given a choice, action is preferable to a static scene; rare or unusual equipment is more interesting than the ordinary. In model photography, the choice of the model will contribute to the impact of the picture. Does the photograph reveal obvious distracting modelling flaws, or has the photographer taken pains to be sure that all the elements shown work together to produce a pleasing result. When the environment is exceptional or the viewpoint makes the ordinary, extraordinary. Full credit should be given for the contribution the photographer's sensitivity brought to the subject.
- (2) **COMPOSITION:** The arrangement of the forms within the photo should be pleasing to the eye. How well did the photographer use the available space within his format and did he or she follow the

guidelines as taught in art and photography courses? If the rules were broken did the result justify that decision?

- (3) **ARTISTIC APPROACH:** This is a rather subjective area where a strongly graphic or symbolic composition may move one judge and a 'typical calendar shot' may be more moving to another. One tends to evaluate artistic and aesthetic qualities on the basis of one's own experience. What moves us and the degree to which we are impressed will change as we are exposed to more and better images. A judge should not start out looking for a special kind of artistry. To do so would be imposing his or her own values, sensibilities, and preconceptions.
- (4) **LIGHTING:** In photography, 'light is law.' It is the only thing that makes it possible for us to expose film. If it is skillfully handled the result can be a work of art, if badly handled the result can be total failure or maybe a snapshot at best. A model shot made with on-camera flash and no background light would be a snapshot. The photographer should be given full credit for his or her use of multiple flash or off camera flash and supplemental reflectors or a well developed room lighting system, depending on the quality of execution. Natural sunlight should be superior to many flash systems, but can and often is badly handled. The best execution of any lighting system in model photography is one that produces a realistic, natural appearance without multiple shadows (there can only be one sun) and without excessively sharp contrast and black holes devoid of details.
- (5) **EXPOSURE:** If a print appears washed out or shadow details are obliterated it may be obvious that the negative was underexposed. If a slide is too dark it is underexposed, if bleached out it is overexposed. Beyond this simple evaluation the judges can also decide whether the exposure is skillfully handled to achieve a desired mood or dramatic effect.
- (6) **FOCUS:** Model photographers should strive to maximize the appearance of sharpness throughout the photo to achieve realistic results. Generally 'selective focus' is not desirable in model or prototype photos since it produces fuzzy areas that are distracting, but there are always exceptions and the judges must determine whether the photographer achieved his or her desired purposes.
- (7) **DIFFICULTY:** Difficulty in photographing the prototype relates to motion, lighting conditions (including weather), selection of an appropriate viewpoint, inherent danger and the knowledge of special techniques and equipment. Night photography, for example, is considerably more difficult than shooting an idle locomotive with the sun over the left shoulder. Model photography involves a different set of technical skills required for close-up work while maintaining acceptable depth-of-field. Model lighting requirements can also be quite complex and difficult as well.
- (8) **SPECIAL EFFECTS:** This would apply to deliberate blurring or panning to accentuate motion, long night exposures to create light streaks, multiple exposures, shooting through fog or smoke, using special effects filters, print toning and any other effects limited only by the photographer's imagination. In model photos special effects include smoke and steam simulation, fog making, panning and wheel spinning, storm simulation and more. The final evaluation should be a response to how well the effect achieved the desired results. Did it work and is the result pleasing or evocative enough to have made the effort worthwhile.
- (9) **TECHNIQUE:** The judges must decide whether colour values are pleasing, correct or believable. Colour saturation should also be evaluated. To some extent this is influenced by the quality of processing. However, whether the final result is acceptable or not is a judgment for which the photographer is responsible. Black and white values are more often controlled by the photographer because more photographers do their own black and white processing than do their own colour. Good blacks, mid-tones and clean whites as well as careful contrast control are essential to any contest quality black and white prints.

(10) FINISH: Prints should not be streaked or blemished and should be bonded correctly to the mount with carefully measured borders. Mounts and mats should be clean, lie flat and excess mounting tissue should not show at the edge of the print. Transparencies should be clean and free of fingerprints and scratches. They should be in mounts that protect them from possible damage and keep the film flat. If a slide or print is unusable for publication reproduction it should be NOT be considered for an award.

d. Awards

- (1) Awards shall be given for First, Second, and Third Place in each category together with as many Honorable Mentions as are deemed necessary by the judges. The decision on awarding Honorable Mentions will be influenced by the quality and number of the entries (ie the degree of difficulty in picking the top three awards from amongst the finalists). Second and Third awards may be omitted if there are insufficient entries of reasonable quality.
- (2) If there are fewer entrants in a category than the number of awards to be given out (normally three) the Contest Chairperson should limit the number of awards to the number of entrants in the category. If there is only one entrant in a category the judges may award either a First or an Honorable Mention at their discretion.
- (3) Best-in-Show will be presented with a Club Contest Certificate, a small engraved plaque to keep permanently, and the Club Trophy to keep until the April meeting of the following year. First Place winners in each category will be presented with a Club Certificate and an engraved plaque. All other winners will be presented with a Club Certificate. All winners will be announced at the contest Open House and all certificates, the plaque and trophy will be awarded at the Annual Banquet.

e. Administrative Matters

- (1) Prior to the event the Photo Contest Chair should confirm with the Show Committee that the space allotted for the Photo Contest is adequate. A projector and screen must be arranged for in order to judge and show the slides.
- (2) A number should be assigned to all entries and a record kept of all entrants to ensure that the entries are returned to the proper owners.
- (3) Prints should be grouped and displayed by category to the extent possible.
- (4) All award winning entries should be marked with a stamp or sticker that indicates that the photo has won in that year's WMRC photo contest.
- (5) A report on the Awards winners names by category should be provided to The Lantern editor within three (3) days after the event.
- (6) Prints may be accepted on a 'display only' basis. These will not be judged.
- (7) The Photo Contest Chairperson is responsible for ensuring that the Photo Contest Judges are arranged for and that the necessary supplies and entry forms are on hand.