Special Election Issue

You Get What You Vote For!

So Quit Complaining And Vote!

Is It Time for Competition Changes ?

CONTENTS

News and Views of Poly Photo Camera Club Members
October/November, 2017   Volume 8, No.10

From the Editor

This combined issue is being published specifically to inform all of you about the upcoming motion to change our monthly competitions back to a single, unlimited category. There has already been a significant amount of opinion and discussion, and Poly Speaks will do its best to document and present the arguments from both sides in a fair and balanced manner.

We have included two very detailed analyses of both of our one and two category systems. Darlene has provided a summary of the actions and opinions of the committee that created the two category approach. (see Page 3) Alan, who made the motion to return to the original Poly principles, has provided his analysis of how well it has worked and why we should abandon the two categories. (see Page 6) I encourage you to read them both before you make a final decision.

As we did for last year's vote to adopt the new system, we are also documenting many of the comments and opinions that Poly members have expressed so far. Some have attribution and some do not, but they will give you a look at what some other members have been thinking. The vote will be at the November 4 meeting, and as always, the decision will be up to all of you.

That said, while Poly Speaks has no opinion, the editor's column in most magazines is the place where the editor gets to tell you about issues that are important to him, and to express his opinions about current problems.

First of all, I must report that I was very surprised by Alan's analysis of the 2016 competition results. It was contrary to my intuitive opinion that there were so few "digital art" winners. (see Page 7) People have disagreed with Alan's statistics, but the data is there in the club records, and you can perform your own analysis if you want. Maybe we did solve a non-existent problem.

But independent of that, I want to now say that I believe that Poly's experiment with

> I believe Poly's experiment with multiple monthly competition categories has been a failure. . . I don't know if it can be fixed.

multiple categories for our monthly competitions has been a failure. Here's why I think that is so.

Its failure is not because it was a bad idea. It's because it has been impossible to implement it properly in the operation of actual competitions with available judges.

The primary reason it doesn't work is how the judges evaluate the work in Category 2. No matter how carefully most judges are instructed about our requirements, they assume that they know best, and they evaluate Cat2 as one that focuses on Photoshop and Post-processing, and not an Open/Unlimited Category, as we intended when it was created.

The next reason for failure lies in the way the limits for Category 1 are defined. They are arbitrary, inconsistent, and don't take the improving capabilities of photo hardware and the available post-processing software into account.

For example, the committee that formulated the rules stated that they wanted to prohibit *"highly-manipulated"* Photoshop images, and composites created from more than a single image file. But, how much manipulation is OK before it crosses the threshold of highly-manipulated?

Also, the rules specifically allow multi-image panoramas, multi-image focus stacking, and HDR pictures created from multiple exposures. These are all methodologies that incorporate the combination of different images (files), in a "stack" of layers; each of which has a complex, detailed layer mask to create a multi-source composite. This is a clear violation of the committee's stated intent.

This inconsistent approach to definitions of "acceptable" competition images leads to careful word-by-word parsing of the rules in the search for methods that will minimize their impact.

Another rule says *"Any cloning is allowed only for the purpose of eliminating spots, blemishes, and extraneous elements that detract from the wholeness of the image (e.g. telephone poles, power lines etc.)."* How many of you think

that everyone follows that exactly, and doesn't have his/her own limits about what is acceptable. How many of you won't clone out a major (non-extraneous) element when removing it improves your picture?

How can we respect (and be expected to follow) arbitrary and inconsistent rules and requirements that are inconsistently applied by our judges?

Finally, we who compete almost all aspire to make our photographs more artistic (sooner or later), and not be documentary or snapshot producers. It is contrary to any artistic discipline to limit the tools and methods used to produce the final output.

But for me, consideration of the logic, consistency, and implementation limitations of the two-category approach is not the most important issue. What worries me the most is what this controversy is doing to our club unity.

I know Category 2 entrants who are feeling alienated and isolated from the rest of the membership. Also, Cat2 images are consistently treated like an afterthought by the judges and the presentation of the images, adding to feelings of separation for Cat2 entrants. "*Oh, wait . . . we're not done . . . there's more . . . we have to do Cat2.*" There have been several local clubs that have split apart and/or died off over issues like this. I hope that Poly has not gone that far.

Some of our members believe we can change the category definitions and rules to solve the most serious of the problems. I'm not so sure. But if we can't, my solution is to go back to the way we were originally organized and founded. It has served us well. Using that approach, Poly has been the most successful club in San Diego. One club, one competition, no limits, embrace technology and growth, and help (not fight) one another. Maybe it's not too late.

Dan's Proposal – Improvement No. 1

A "Combined-Category" for Competition High-Points Awards

Poly members have asked for a way to enter images in both of Poly's Competition Categories (Cat 1 and Cat 2) during the year and still be eligible for High-Points Awards. The proposed Poly Bylaws' Amendment (described below) will create First, Second, and Third-place Awards for a Combined-Category at the end of the year for this purpose. You'll be eligible to receive one of these Awards if you've entered at least 6 of your 22-possible image entries in both Cat 1 and Cat 2 anytime during the competition year.

At Poly's November 4th meeting, I plan to make a motion to amend Poly's Bylaws by adding the following words to the end of Article XII, Section 6 of Poly's current Bylaws.

"First, Second, and Third place High-Points Awards shall be given at Year-End separately to winners of Categories 1 and 2; and also to winners of a Combined-Category for those who have entered at least 6 of a possible 22 images in both Categories 1 and 2 during the competition year.

If a member qualifies for High-Points Awards in more than one Category, only the highest Award will be given regardless of which Category it occurred in. In the event that the same Award is earned in multiple Categories (e.g., two Third Places), only one Award will be given using the following Category hierarchy: (1) Category 1, (2) Category 2, and lastly (3) the Combined-Category."

– Dan Palermo

From the President

THE ARGUMENT FOR CONTINUING WITH TWO CATEGORIES

Why did Poly change from one to two categories?
In 2016 a questionnaire revealed that a number of members were unhappy about having their minimally-edited images competing against highly-composited and highly-manipulated ones.

What was the result?
A committee was formed to create a category that separated the lightly-edited images (Category 1) from the "anything goes" images (Category 2). A motion was made and passed to amend the bylaws to add Category 2. The motion passed by a vote of 31 to 11.

Why are two categories better than one?
Photographers who use minimal editing for natural/realistic images prefer to be competing with the same type of images. They would like highly-manipulated or highly-composited images to be judged in their own category.

Will two categories increase interest in Poly's competitions?
We believe interest will increase as more people venture into C2. Recently, a member decided to step out of his comfort zone in Category 1 to create a Category 2 image. He said it turned out to be great fun and is now inspired to enter Category 2 again. Another member said that now, during competition, he can't wait to see "what wildness lurks in the next image."

How do members feel about the two-category system?
- "Cat 2 opens my imagination for so many ways to create art."
- "The 2-Category competition system has renewed my enthusiasm for showing images in Poly. I especially like having my Photoshop-manipulated images compared to other manipulated images; pushing me to grow both artistically and creatively."
- "For me, thanks to Michele's and Dan's creative thinking, my photography has changed to be more fun. I see things differently now when I take a picture."
- "To me the two Categories system offers the best of both worlds. There is an unrestricted Category 2, essentially the same as before. Then a more restrictive Category 1 where I can compete with fellow members who prefer more "conventional" realistic photography and be judged side by side with similar style images."
- "I sure dislike to see my conventional image judged and scored right next to a "WOW" digitally manipulated/processed one. At the same time with CAT2 I have the chance to experiment and test my developing skills in the newer field of digital manipulation without consideration on how I will score.....for now."
- "I always look forward to the creative C2 images, but had not seriously tried compositing because I didn't know how. It's definitely a lot of work and has a big learning curve, but I had a ball creating a "story." I plan to enter C2 again, but now I have even greater respect for the skillful "Kings and Queens" of composited images."
- "I would not like to see my photographic images judged alongside what I consider a different art form. I would not join a group that mixed photography with watercolors or oil paintings either. Keep 'em separate."
- "The change to two categories has renewed my interest in going to the Poly competitions. I now look forward to seeing all the CAT 2 images together and can, therefore, better

appreciate the artistic talents of our members. Makes the experience of sitting through the monthly competitions much more enjoyable. Two categories are more fun than one."
- From a judge: "I personally think having two different categories for judging at Poly makes sense."

What if I use a composite or a plug in feature but my image looks very natural?
The intent of creating a second category was to separate highly-manipulated images from the more natural-looking ones. When an image has, for example, changed skies but still looks natural, it must technically be entered into C2. This is an unfair situation and the wording of the categories will be amended to correct this issue.

Does having a second category provide more opportunities for awards?
Yes, but this was not the original intent. It's an added benefit. Having two categories rewards those who do simple photo enhancements separately from those who perform complex digital composites/manipulations. Another benefit is the possibility that a greater interest in competitions may come about by having more chances to win awards. Winning an award is exciting, but members are more interested in hearing critiques of their images.

How does having two categories affect the High Points Competition?
This is an issue that is being resolved with a proposal to come at the November meeting.

How do the two categories affect judging?
At least one judge has stated that he thinks having two different categories for judging makes sense. For Category 2, a judge can recommend ways to make an image stronger by suggesting a wider variety of post-processing ideas and tools. Viewing C2 images side by side may even help a judge to better evaluate them.

Where can I find more information to help me choose which category to enter?
An informal guide for 2018 will be made available to members to help with those decisions.

Conclusion
As the year has progressed, it has become obvious that there is some confusion and misunderstanding regarding intention and interpretation of the two categories as now implemented. But, we do not feel that is a good reason to go backwards to one category (Alan's motion) where the wide array of composited and more traditional photographic images created by Poly members would compete against each other.
After October's meeting, a member said he remembers, long ago, when the club was considering transitioning from slides to digital. There was strong resistance to this change – but look at us, now!
Wouldn't it make more sense to make any needed improvements in the two category system and move into the future? We hope you will **cast a "NO" vote** to Alan's proposal in November to return to "a single category".

Darlene Elwin, President
Poly Photo Club

A Single Category for Open Competition

By Alan Haynes

At the October 2017 competition meeting, I will make a motion for a vote to change Poly's competition rules and <u>return to a single category</u> for open competition as we had in 2016 and prior years.

For the past nine monthly competitions, we've split our open competition entries into two categories: category one where "all adjustments must appear natural" with compositing disallowed, and category two in which "there are no limits."

The competition change was approved as a trial for 2017 only. We've tried it and it isn't working. I'll explain why later in this article.

The Origin of the Two-Category Proposal

According to our President, Dee Elwin, the idea of separate categories for competition came from a few members who mentioned it in an informal survey Dee had conducted by email. The survey results have never been made public, so we don't know how many members made this suggestion or what their reasoning was.

Club meeting minutes show that on August 6th, 2016, Dan Palermo announced that a competition committee had formed and it was considering splitting the open competition into two categories, one for photo realistic images and one for artistic/creative images.

At each subsequent business meeting over the next few months, refinements to the two-category idea were presented to the club. In September, it was announced that the committee members included Dan, Ernesto Corte, Beverly Brock, Paul Shilling, Bob Howe, Dee Elwin and Diane Patterson. At this meeting, Dee said that if the change was approved by the membership, it would be a "trial change for 2017 only." (As recorded in Poly's official meeting minutes dated September 3rd, 2016).

On November 5th, 2016, the club voted – by secret paper ballot – on the final proposal. It was approved by a vote of 31 for and 11 against.

The Argument for Two Categories

The <u>November 2016 edition of our club newsletter,</u> *Poly Speaks*, contained several articles about the new proposal.

President Dee Elwin wrote that "Category 1 would be for members who prefer to do only basic (or light) editing to their photographs. These members would prefer to have their images judged against like images. This may be an advantage to members who are new to photography, or have limited editing skills or tools." She went on to say that "Category 2 would be the same as we now have in Poly's Open Competition. Any amount of editing, plug-ins, composites, etc. is allowed."

Paul Shilling wrote an article explaining the committee's views. Below are some of the main points from Paul's article.

- The committee felt that having two categories would better adhere to Poly's objective to develop photographic skill through education, practice and critique and better address the needs of novice photographers than the single category system.
- The committee believed that requiring members to develop "both photographic and post-processing skills" was a lot to ask. New members would no longer be intimidated by competing against the "great photographers and incredible digital artists in the club. It's likely

"that the digital art is even more intimidating and that is why some members have asked for a separate category for composites."
- The committee believes that "photography skills must come first" and once the novice feels more confident they can "jump into category 2."
- Having two categories would result in more winners. Although this was not the primary motivation for creating the two categories, it was seen by the committee as a positive result of the new proposal.
- At the September 2016 meeting, a poll was taken and a "clear majority were in favor of making a change to two categories."
- The prior, single-category system made "the judging process more challenging."

The Poly Speaks editor, Jim Mildice, compiled a list of comments about the competition that he had overheard from other members. Some of the more interesting are repeated below.
- "Realistic images do not do well when judged against Fantasy images."
- "This would be a violation of one of Poly's founding principles. 'Any and all images must compete on an equal basis."
- "I have no hope of winning if I must compete against highly-manipulated images."
- "Poly's foundation was based on the principal that there are no limits on the methods and/or technology used to create our images."
- "I don't like highly-manipulated, Photoshop images."
- "It's time to face the facts of life – To be a serious, modern (amateur or professional) photographer, you need to develop your skills in picture taking and in post-processing."
- Poly also has always embraced change. Changes in image styles, and/or in equipment and/or methods and/or technology have always been accepted enthusiastically. So, we can try a new category that limits post-processing as long as the "open" category continues with no limits."
- "Having categories and rules about the tools methods used in artistic expression is the antithesis of art. If we aspire to be artists, we must resolve not to accept them."
- "We should all be able to use all the tools that are available to us to produce a finished image."

The Case for a Single Category

What benefit is there in adding a second category for composite and digital art images? As mentioned above, the stated purpose for this change to two categories was to make it easier for novice photographers or those with limited post-processing skills to better compete against more experienced photographic artists. Has that goal been accomplished? Was it even necessary in the first place?

If composite and digital art images were, in fact, difficult to compete against, we'd expect to see those types of images dominating the awards in prior years when Poly had only one open competition category. It's easy to see that that was *not* the case.

Competition Winners: The Facts

Click on the 2016 Monthly Winners link on our website and you'll see that only *seven* of the 33 winners were obviously digital art or composites. Only two of those won first-place. In four of the months, *none* of the winners were these types of images. During 2015, there were 10 digital/composite winners out of 33 and only two of these won first-place. Here's a link.

Perhaps there were others that include techniques now allowed only in category two, but since they *appear* realistic, they would still be perfectly acceptable in category one.

What does this tell us? Despite protestations to the contrary, minimally-processed and "realistic" images do compete very well against artistic/composite images; they usually do better.

The idea that artistic/composite images are too hard to compete against is not supported by the facts. The two-category solution was an answer to a non-existent problem.

Very few members enter category two regularly. The median number of entrants per month is nine. The median number of images entered in category two is also low: 13 images per month. Only one member has consistently entered two images every month in category two for a total of 16 images. Only two other members have broken double digits: one with 12 entries for the year and another with 11. Thirteen members entered three or fewer images for the year: less than half the number of entries allowed.

The Trouble with Two Categories

Lack of Participation
The main problem with having two competition categories is that there are not many entries in category two. The three or four members who enter regularly are competing among themselves. This is hardly enough participation to warrant a second category.

Novice Photographers
And novice members will certainly be reluctant to enter this advanced category. How could a member who is just beginning to explore Photoshop hope to compete against the artists in category two? So, the idea of reducing the "intimidation" felt by novices doesn't fly either. Another implication regarding novices is that they will be able to more successfully compete in category one. The high quality of images entered in that category renders that point absurd. There *is* a lot to learn for a novice photographer even without post-processing. How can a novice compete against skilled photographers who have spent years honing their skills, who have the best equipment and who travel to the most interesting places? It's doubtful that any photographer's early work will stand much of a chance against these accomplished artists.

Stifling Photographic Expression
Poly has always been open to all types of photography. Our bylaws clearly state that "All forms of photographic expression are allowed including color, black-and-white and *manipulated* images" and that "All images shall be judged on the same categorical basis without consideration of subject matter." The two-category rules fly in the face of these guiding principles that have served the club well for many years.

Confused Judges
Our monthly judges have been confused by the requirements of the two different categories. At the September competition, Eileen Mandell stopped to ask if infrared images were allowed in category one.

In August, Sally Vogt Ries assumed an image was a Photoshop creation and, therefore, not appropriate for category one. This was John Kane's image of a fish reflected in a drop of water. It was created entirely in-camera with minimal post-processing. Later in that same competition, she said she "forgot which category we're in because we just transitioned to the new category."

Monica Royal was also confused during the July competition. She said, "This is category 1, so we can't talk about removing the water bottle or the sun flare, can we?"

There are many ways to make creative images in-camera which may be mistaken for post-processing work: a special lenses such as a Lensbaby, in-camera multiple exposures, shooting through textured fabric or glass. It seems that the method used to photograph creative images entered in category one will need to be continually debated during competition.

The competition committee contended that having a single category made the judging process more challenging. We now know that to be wrong. Multiple categories mean *more* confusion, not less.

Winning Is Everything

Although competition has always been a big part of Poly, should it be the *main* part? Is winning more important than learning? The only reason we have two competition categories is so that members can have what they think is a better chance of winning. Should members be willing to do whatever it takes to win? It seems like some do have this attitude, and it's not new.

Here's a story of a conversation I overheard a few years ago. A local bird photographer who is well-liked and known for freely sharing his knowledge was judging for Poly. Afterward, he decided to join Poly. One of our members approached him and said something like, "You're not going to enter your bird photos into competition, are you? We'll never have a chance to win." Although he'd already paid for his membership, that expert photographer never returned as a member to Poly.

That member's attitude is the same attitude that drove us to two categories: win more often by eliminating competition from better photographers.

The 2016 Vote

It was mentioned earlier that, in an informal poll of members a "clear majority were in favor of making a change to two categories." This is not entirely true. The subject of that poll was whether it was worth the committee's time to explore the *idea* of two categories and to develop a proposal. The proposal did not exist at the time of that poll, so it would have been impossible for members to approve making the change.

Once the proposal was ready, the club did vote to approve it by a large margin. But let's not forget that this proposal was presented as "a trial change for 2017 only." Poly has always been open to change. For example, we once agreed not to read image titles during competition for a year. The following year, we went back to reading them.

The 2017 PROPOSAL

It's time to end Poly's two-category experiment. It's not working. . (UPDATE: the bylaws revision was uploaded to our Yahoo site shortly after this article originally appeared.) The proposed vote is to change our competition rules and methods back to the way they are stated in the in the bylaws as of December, 2016.

Conclusion

Segregation of competition images into categories based on the method used to create them is wrong for our club. The word from which our club's name is derived, "poly", is meant to convey Poly Photo Club's shining difference from other clubs in the San Diego area: we welcome *all* types of photography. Whatever a photographer's specialty, they've always been welcomed.

There will always be someone better than you. Be inspired by their great work. Learn from what you see and work hard to improve your skills. If you're willing to do that, you won't want to be categorized.

Vote YES to allow all members to again compete equally.

This and That
By Clark Winsor

Looking back at our September competition, our judge only gave one six, and that was after giving the same image a seven twice during her comments. At the last moment, she changed the image's score to a six. The breakdown of the scores, in Category 1 there were 20 sevens, 22 eights, and 12 nines. In Category 2 there were 6 nines, 4 eights, 3 sevens, and 1 six.

We did better in October. Our judge actually understood our scoring system. There were 48 entries in Category 1. The breakdown was 7 sixes, 21 sevens, 14 eights, and 5 nines.

Category 2 had 19 entries. The breakdown was 1 six, 6 sevens, 8 eights, and 4 nines.

When our competition numbering system was created the makers believed that the rules separating each value 5 through 9 would be easy to apply. That has not been the case. Our scoring system creates confusion for our judges. The system is responsible for the wide variances in our scoring.

The only reason we have a scoring system that uses numbers is to have a high points competition. The value of a high points competition escapes me, but some members really like this idea.

Our rules allow members to op-out of the high points, and too many members do that. This lessens its value. Creating a high points competition for both Category 1 and Category 2 further weakens the value of having a high points competition. Lastly, our competition rules are preventing members from entering either category during the year and having a combined total for high points. As a result, members interested in high points are entering either CAT1 or CAT2 for the entire year. When a member takes this approach, our two-category system suffers. Taking all this into consideration, I believe we have three important issues to address:

1. Rewrite the two-category system's rules.
2. Create a workable High Points Competition.
3. Fix our flawed judging system.

In September, I offered my ideas on using a different judging system that would improve the judging process, and allow more time for the judge to comment on every image. I have gotten a lot of very positive feed back on the improvements I suggested. This month, I am proposing an easy way to fix the high points competition, and the two-category system.

First fix for high points competition.
Stop creating a separate spreadsheet for the CAT1 and CAT2 to record the monthly scores. Under each month have two boxes. One box will be for the CAT1 score and one for the CAT2 score. Excel will calculate totals horizontally or vertically and can give us the total points by Category or by combined categories. It can't get any simpler than that.

Now let's take a look at the two category system.

Number one – Get rid of the names of the two categories,

CAT1 and CAT2 mean nothing. Instead call one category Natural and the other Artistic.

Number two – Get rid of all the rules that separate the two categories. They're not enforceable, and all they do is create confusion. Allow the maker to use all the tools in his or her toolbox, and when the final image is created let them decide which category to enter. They will know if it is a Natural image or an Artistic image. Again, this fix is just that simple.

Talk to you next month,
Clark

Random Opinions from Our Members

The quotes in Darlene's article are all in support of two category competition. This section is a random compilation of opinions from both sides of the issue. There is no significance in the numbers of each or the order in which they are presented.

We're going to vote to remove competition categories at our next meeting. It's an important vote. As of right now I do not support either removing the category or leaving it as it is now. What does work for me is a two category system that has no restrictions on tools used to create pictures or art images. I do not believe in separating the categories to count high points. I believe that high points must be added together from both categories to have one winner. If the vote goes forward as it is now, I will abstain.

– Clark

"**It's time to face the facts of life** – To be a serious, modern (amateur or professional) photographer, you need to develop your skills in picture taking and in post-processing. Where does it say that you should win awards when competing against experienced photographers during the early phases of your development?"

"**The *"No Photoshop Composites"* rule is inconsistent and can be evaded.** With modern equipment, we can create composites without Photoshop.

For example, current cameras can do multiple exposures and treat them like Photoshop layers in that they can be combined (in camera) using blend modes. So you can create a composite totally in the camera.

Recently, a Cat1 entry had an unreal (upside down) image in a water drop. It was created by photographing a background image, printing it, and using the print (inverted) as a background for the forground branch and water drop when taking a second image. Two separate images were combined, so it was clearly a composite; but it was declared acceptable for Cat1 because it was not created with Photoshop. It was a truly interesting and original approach; but why is one kind of composite better than another?"

"**Catagory1 images have often clearly been heavily Photoshoped.** I thought that Cat1 was for pictures that used only limited post processing. How are we going to judge the difference between too much and just enough?"

"**I like two categories**. I think we will lose members if we go back to the old way."

"**I don't like two categories**. I think we will lose members if we keep this system."

"**The recent change to two categories has renewed my interest in going to the monthly Poly competitions.** I now look forward to seeing all the CAT 2 like images together and can, therefore, better appreciate the artistic talents of our members. Makes the experience of sitting through the monthly competitions much more enjoyable. Can't wait to see how the maker's imagination comes to life in the next image. Two categories are much more fun than one."

"**Two categories give us more awards**. I like having more medals and ribbons avaliable to the competitors."

"Some people are pushing the Cat1 limits. Some entries are too close to, or over the line of the rules."

"I'm becoming discouraged about competition because of all the detailed rules and the fighting and quarrelling."

"Even the San Diego Fair has different categories. But for almost all of the categories, there are no limits on post processing as long as the result looks natural."

"**Despite protestations to the contrary, minimally-processed and "realistic" images do compete very well against artistic/composite images**; they usually do better. The idea that artistic/composite images are too hard to compete against is not supported by the facts. The two-category solution was an answer to a non-existent problem."

 "We need an emotional pride incentive for photographers to aspire to the *Open* category. How about changing the category titles to *Novice* and *Advanced*?"

"Cat 1 goals are not being met. After re-reading the articles that were published last year in preparation for this change, they seemed to state that their intended purpose for 2 categories was to make novices and those that do not like to use post processing of images feel less intimidated. In fact, you would expect this to be the smaller category. The reality is there are a very large number of images in Category 1 that seem heavily processed."

"The blurring of the "rules" for Category 1 entries seems to be a familiar and frequent practice."

"It is impossible to enforce detailed rules like we now have for Category 1. We need more general requirements like "*Reality*" for Cat1 and "*Fantasy/Fiction/Enhanced Reality*" for Cat2."

"Keep Two Competition Categories in Poly, it works!
   Last year, I won Poly's High-Points yearly competition. I had an advantage. All Competition images were judged as "photography." So no matter what kinds of digital mind-bending techniques I used, Judges still had to compare my creatively manipulated images against traditional-style photography.
   Was it fair? Most would say "No." Why? Because if I added a spectacular sunset, beautiful trees, textures from the internet, artificial reflections, or even created a digital image from my imagination; Poly rules said it was "OK" as long as I somehow started from a camera's image.
   This year, competition rules vastly improved. Under our current Two-Category competition system, photo-art and illustrations can only be compared with each other in Poly's "Anything Goes" Category (Cat 2). As a result, Judges have been far tougher on my creations. And since manipulated images are not allowed in Poly's traditional-style Category 1, Judges can suggest ways to improve traditional images with in-camera techniques, rather than by post-processing with a computer.
   There's a renewed enthusiasm for entering images at Poly. Traditional and Anything-Goes photography are critiqued separately, but awarded evenly. Regardless of what kind of photographer you are, competition has become fairer. For these and many more reasons, I'm asking you to "Vote No" and say "No" to getting rid of our Two-Category Competition. It works!"

<div align="right">– Dan</div>

"The committee believes that "photography skills must come first and once the novice feels more confident they can "jump into Category 2.""

"I sure dislike to see my conventional image judged and scored right next to a "WOW" digitally manipulated/processed one. At the same time with CAT2 I have the chance to experiment and test my developing skills in the newer field of digital manipulation without consideration on how I will score.....for now."

"I, for one, favor the two-category system, but have detected flaws that can be corrected simply. Let's not "throw the baby out with the bath water" and go backwards.

Problem 1, is definitely <u>the words used to identify the two-category system</u>. Rather than Cat1, or Cat2, it would clarify which category to enter if we used "**Realistic**" and "**Artistic**." AND, <u>eliminate all the Rules for each category</u>.

We don't need to know "how" you got to the finished product. If it looks real it shouldn't matter how advanced you are in manipulating the various filters, or if you are showing us a totally in-camera picture.

Problem 2, has been the judges not quite understanding the difference between the categories. So again, - instead of a number if we used words, - "Realistic" and "Artistic" it would be clear what the maker intended to depict.

Problem 3, is the order in which they are projected. We now have "Projects" first, followed by Cat1 and then Cat2. There are generally about 10-20 in Project, about 10-20 in "Cat2". If these two categories were projected one after the other, with the larger "open" Cat1 following, I think it might be easier for the judges since each would have their own specified title. For example: the project would be identified using the name of the required work that month, say - "*Shadows*"; and following it would be our old Cat 2, - now known as "*Artistic*", followed by the old Cat1, - now called "*Realistic*."

Yes, we could not spell out Artistic or Realistic, because it would cause our pictures titles to be too long for Bill. But, an A or a R followed by a dash, or period, or.. whatever Bill needs, and the picture title, should solve that problem.

Photography is not my major interest, and I'm one of those not particularly interested in "making art", but rather enjoy showing the viewer what often is not seen by the naked eye. However, I really do enjoy seeing the results of artistic people's imagination and the magical pictures they produce! And, like most people in the Poly audience, I am interested in hearing what the (non-biased) judge has to say. Several years ago I saw a few judges falter when faced with a lovely flower picture after a magical picture. Each deserving of praise, but the violent change of subject catching the judge by surprise. This has not been happening this year, as the judges now know that all-the-following are manipulated pictures. They've been free to suggest and praise without worry of accusing someone of using filters or software. Their job has become easier.

– Dorothy

Current Bylaws Requirements

ARTICLE XII – MONTHLY COMPETITION

PREAMBLE TO GUIDELINES
By virtue of submitting an entry, the photographer certifies the work as his/her own, and is of photographic origin. Images may only be manipulated as noted in individual category definitions. The images of each category shall be separately judged on the same categorical basis without consideration of subject matter.

Section 1: A competition shall be held at the first meeting of each month. Each member may enter up to two digital images. All forms of photographic expression are allowed including color, gray scale/ monochrome and infrared. Entries may originate in a digital camera or in a film camera where the film has been digitally scanned. Members may enter one image in each category, or two images in one category, but not two in each of the following categories:

CATEGORY 1
   All adjustments must appear natural. Any cloning is allowed only for the purpose of eliminating spots, blemishes, and extraneous elements that detract from the wholeness of the image (e.g. telephone poles, power lines etc.).
   Adding/importing new elements from other sources outside of the image itself ("compositing") is not allowed. Images with this type of manipulation can be submitted in CATEGORY 2.
   Techniques such as HDR and focus stacking are allowed. Stitching for the purpose of creating a panorama, and conversion to gray scale / monochrome is also allowed. There are no restrictions on subjects for images in this category.

CATEGORY 2
Images not qualifying under Category 1 may be entered here.
   Entered images must be created by the entrant and start with his/her original photograph. They may not be completely constructed of graphic elements created with a computer. When any graphic elements other than original photographs are incorporated into an image, the maker-produced photographic content of the completed, final image must still prevail. There are no restrictions on the subjects, workflow, or software used to create Category 2 images.

Section 2: All images shall be judged on the same categorical basis without consideration of subject matter. The judge shall not be a club member. In an emergency, a qualified member may act as judge, provided that such a member does not enter that month's competition. Any member acting as emergency judge shall be allowed one makeup entry consisting of two images at a future competition during the year.
   The competition date may be changed at the discretion of the Executive Board as long as the membership is notified of the change at least 30 days prior to the originally scheduled competition date.
   The judge shall be instructed to critique each image and offer constructive comments as deemed appropriate. The judge shall then rate each image on a scale of 5-9 according to the following guidelines:
   A. 5 points = some technical deficiencies; not showing any particular skill of the photographer
   B. 6 points = average, some showing of the photographer's use of good technique and recognition of an interesting subject
   C. 7 points = fairly strong in technique and interesting; worthy of being accepted for exhibition.
   D. 8 points = well balanced; strong in interest, composition and technique and impact.
   E. 9 points = exceptionally good; high in interest, composition, technique and impact.
      It must be recognized that an image may be so strong in some areas that it overrides weakness in some other area.

Section 3: Images scoring a 7 or more shall be considered acceptances. Images scoring less than 7 may be re-entered. First, second, and third place images shall be picked by the judge in the following manner:
  A. First place shall be selected from those images scoring a 9.
  B. If no images scored 9, the selection shall be made from those scoring 8.
  C. If no images scored 9 or 8, the selection shall be made from those scoring 7.
  D. Second and third place shall be selected from those images remaining from the 9's first, then the 8's, then the 7's as applicable.

Section 4: Judges shall be instructed to select first, second, and third place winners from each category at each monthly competition.

Section 5: Points received by a maker shall be recorded and counted toward the year-end high-points awards. A member may participate in any or all of the monthly competitions and elect not to participate and have his/her scores totaled and posted in the competition for yearly "High Points Awards." That same member may still enter a maximum of eight of his/her accepted images in the "Year End" competition.

Section 6: Once an exhibited image has been accepted in Club competition (by receiving a score of seven points or greater), it, or a near duplicate taken at the same time, cannot be entered in any future monthly competition. Another image that is created from the same original digital file that is clearly different and not a near duplicate of the accepted image may be entered in any future competition.

Section 7: No makeups shall be allowed for any missed monthly competitions. Yearly high-points competition scores shall be determined by the total of the highest nine of the eleven possible monthly scores. If a member participates in fewer than nine monthly competitions per year, his/her high-points competition score will be calculated by using the total of the competitions in which he/she actually participated.

Section 8: A monthly "Project" competition shall also be held at the discretion of the members.

ARTICLE XIII – YEAR END COMPETITION

Section 1: Entries in the year-end competition shall be chosen from the accepted images from the monthly competitions. Each member shall choose his or her images that have received a score of seven or higher from Category 1 or Category 2, or a combination of both for a total of eight images. Submitted images may be improved versions of the original accepted images from the monthly competitions, as long as they are clearly the same image. Improvements may be based on the photographer's judgment or the judge's comments. The President or the Competition Chairperson shall make arrangements as they deem appropriate to judge said images. The judges shall select First, Second and Third place winners in each of the two categories plus approximately ten percent of the entries in each category as Honorable Mentions. First, second and third place winners in each category shall receive inscribed medals. Honorable Mentions shall receive ribbons.

Section 2: High-points honors result from totaling the points in each category accumulated from the monthly competitions as defined in Article XII, Section 6. The names of the high-points winners shall be inscribed on the High-Points Perpetual Trophies. Inscribed medals shall be awarded to the First place winners, and Second and Third place runners-up. In the event of a tie for first place, both names shall be engraved on the High Points Trophy and both shall receive inscribed medals.