

2025 COMPETITION CATEGORIES and POST-PROCESSING RULES

February 27

Open (Projected)

“Open” means that just about anything goes – from straight photography to photo-based digital art. You can submit a portrait or landscape straight out of the camera, a psychedelic multi-layered composited extravaganza, or something in between. All elements must be 100% the maker's work and derived from a photograph. Non-photographic elements like drawings are not allowed. Textures are permitted as long as they are based on an image captured by the maker.

Leading Lines (Print)

Leading lines guide you through the image, taking you from one place to another. Pretty much anything can be used as a leading line. Roads, paths, power lines, the water's edge at the beach or lake – they all can work. However, a leading line doesn't have to be an obvious continuous line like a road. It could be a series of rocks, flowers, or even a line of stars like the Milky Way. The trick is to see these things not as rocks, flowers, or stars, but as lines and get them to point to something. Most often, a leading line is used to guide you to a focal point. However, the destination can also be less defined. For example, a line taking you to the horizon and beyond could work.

Nightscape (Projected)

A nightscape is a time image that creates a sense of environment. For example, a night time city scape that evokes vibrant night life or sleep-like quiet, a moonlit scene, or the Milky Way over a landscape. However, the goal is an picture of a scene, and not a portrait of the moon or stars. The fundamental “scape” should be real. For example, if there's a moon in your picture then the moon must have been there. **Processing:** Exposure blending is allowed.

April 24

Open (Print)

An Open category will be included in every competition. “Open” means that just about anything goes – from straight photography to photo-based digital art. You can submit a portrait or landscape straight out of the camera, a psychedelic multi-layered composited extravaganza, or something in between. All elements must be 100% the maker's work and derived from a photograph. Non-photographic elements like drawings are not allowed. Textures are permitted as long as they are based on an image captured by the maker.

Wabi Sabi (Projected)

In a simplified way, Wabi Sabi in art is about beauty in imperfection or flawed beauty. The philosophy behind the art comes from three Buddhist teachings: nothing lasts forever, nothing is finished and nothing is perfect. Wabi is translated as “subdued, austere beauty” and Sabi as “rustic patina.” Examples might include a cracked vase, rusty car, dead flower or abandoned building. In addition to the ideas of imperfection and impermanence, Wabi Sabi art expresses simplicity, tranquility and humility. **Processing:** Follow the general guidelines.

Reflections

Things reflected in water, mirrors, windows or any reflective surface. The reflection has to be

real. **Processing:** No composites.

June 26

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Nature

We follow the PSA definition. You can read it here <https://psa-photo.org/page/division-definitions>. The key points are: Nature images may include landscapes, geologic formations, weather, animals, and plants as the primary subject matter. Human elements must not be present, except where those human elements are integral parts of the nature story such as nature subjects, like barn owls or storks, adapted to an environment modified by humans, or where those human elements are in situations depicting natural forces, like hurricanes or tidal waves. The truth of the scene must be preserved. You can't remove things except by cropping.

Travel

A travel image conveys a story or emotion/feeling about a place, its people and/or culture. Since it is also about your reaction to a place, staged shots from workshops or other events designed for photography are not allowed. Also, since travel photography is used mostly in photojournalism or for illustration, there will be a bias in judging toward photo realism.

Processing: Minimal compositing is allowed as long as it doesn't change the probable truth of an image and appears realistic. For example, you can add a sailboat to a picture of a lighthouse, but not palm trees if none exist in reality. Sky replacements, exposure blending and HDR are allowed. Images may be monochrome or color.

AUGUST 28

Open (Print)

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Green (Projected)

This category is about the color green. You can photograph whatever you want – people, animals, places, things, abstracts, etc. - but the dominant color has to be green. Processing: Follow the general rules.

Black & White (Projected)

In this category, judges look for black, white and shades of grey, along with composition, impact, etc. Check out some of the old masters like Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lang, Henri Cartier-Bresson plus old black and white movies like Citizen Kane, Casablanca, or any of the old Hitchcock's, and notice how they use light and shadow to create a mood and help tell the story. In addition to the more traditional look, you could also try high key in which the image is mostly bright tones with just a few bits of grey and/or black, or try low key, which has mostly dark tones. Any subject works for this category. **Processing:** HDR and other exposure blends are okay, but no sky replacements or other forms of compositing.

OCTOBER 23

Open (Print)

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Framing

We're looking for images with the "frame within a frame" idea. It's about using one element in the scene to frame another in some way. Examples include using a door or window to frame an outside scene, a tree branch framing a house, person or whatever, or maybe a mouse peering out at you from a hole in a wall. The frame doesn't have to be all four sides, but should package the subject in an obvious way. **Processing:** No restrictions outside the general guidelines.

Portraits (Projected)

A portrait is more than just a picture of a person. It should capture a personality. In this case, however, it's not even just about people. You can also enter portraits of animal - domesticated or wild. The portrait can be of just head and shoulders or full body, but the face must be prominent. Formal portraits, candid, street photos, bird on a stick, etc. are all eligible.

Processing: You can do whatever you want within the general guidelines, but remember that portraits are about revealing the personality of the subject. Special effects could help or hurt.

2025 Post-Processing Rules Update for CCACC Competitions

General Guidelines

All elements of an image must be from a photograph created by you. In general, all tone, color, sharpening, noise reduction changes and removal of elements may be done to the image regardless of how the edit is accomplished. However, there are limits on how much editing you can do to pictures submitted for Nature, Photojournalism and other other “true-to-life” categories. Prompt-generated imagery and AI generative-fill for scene expansion are not allowed.

Always read the category description for specific processing rules before submitting a picture.

Not allowed

- Use of third party images such as textures or skies that have been purchased, downloaded or included as part of software.
- Use of Generative Fill and prompt-generated AI programs to create new imagery.
- Watermarks, logos or any other identifying mark. (Generative Fill for object removal and re-touching is allowed.)
- Compositing (except in the Open category and any other category that specifically allows it). Compositing includes sky replacements, textures and other forms of moving elements from one image to another.

Allowed

- Cropping.
- Exposure and color adjustments, including the use of presets either included with your software, purchased or downloaded for free.
- Removal and/or moving of elements (except in Nature and Photojournalism or other “true-to-life” categories). This includes use of the clone stamp, healing brushes, content-aware tools, etc.
- Generative Fill (as long as it is in the context of retouching/removal and not adding new subject matter).
- HDR and exposure composites of a same scene (eg in a night scene it’s okay to combine a long exposure of the foreground with a shorter one of the stars) .
- Focus Stacking and stacking for noise reduction.
- Noise reduction.
- Lens and perspective corrections.
- Compositing is allowed in Open competitions and when specifically included in other categories. This includes sky replacements, textures and other forms of moving elements from one image to another.
- Computational tools built in to cameras and phones for exposure and color control, but not for adding new elements such as textures not in the original scene.
- “Artistic” filters such a painting simulations are allowed in the Open category and may be allowed in other categories on a case-by-case basis.