

2023-2024 Five State Juror's Statement

I am honored and excited to serve for the third time as your juror for the 2023 Five-State Photography Exhibition. The Five-State has always been an excellent show and seems to get better every year. I was a working photojournalist in Hays when the Five-State first began 40 years ago and I am impressed by how it has grown, not only in numbers but in quality as well.

My area of photography has always been photojournalism, working for 40 years first at newspapers and now at the Associated Press. Although there is plenty of room for creativity in this field, photojournalists have always been very careful to present a truthful image and not to manipulate images. That said, it is always a treat to view the vast scope of images that fall under the umbrella of photography. While my expertise is photojournalism, I have no bias for that style of photography in my judging and was a bit surprised how few images I picked that would classify as such.

Having judged this contest in the former format where photographers entered framed prints in various sizes and the new format where every entry is a simple 8x10 print, I think I much prefer the current format. As a juror, I found it refreshing to be able to view photos that were similar in size and presentation. There were no massive prints or impressive framing treatments to influence my impression of an image. The new format forced me to judge a photo solely on its merits. It was also helpful to be able to winnow the categories down to the top dozen or so and look at them side-by-side to make the final placements. This is much more difficult to do in a galley setting where entries are scattered about a gallery.

Of course, I understand size and presentation are all elements of an artistic presentation, but it is refreshing to have those distractions removed and look only at the photo itself.

The judging process itself involved several rounds of elimination. Initially, I took a quick look at all the photos in a category and divided them into two groups – those that are eliminated and those that likely might make the show. From there, I took a closer look and pulled out a dozen or so that rose to the top and were candidates for an award. Next, to make sure I didn't overlook something, I went back through the photos eliminated in the first round of judging and actually pulled a few back into the mix. After that, I looked at the dozen or so selects in each category side by side and selected the cash awards. The photos that remained after the cash awards were then combined, and from that group I awarded the Juror's Merit recognition and finalized which pieces were included in the show.

My criteria for determining what a good photo is, is fairly straightforward involving technical, artistic and emotional elements. The foundation of a good photo includes technical elements like focus, exposure, etc. Next, artistic elements such as lighting and composition are incorporated to create a captivating scene. Finally, I look for that little extra something that propels a photo from average to great. This includes elements like a decisive moment, juxtaposition, subject interactions and other intangibles that come together to really captivate the viewer.

All in all, I was very impressed with the talent in the region and the work which was entered. I encourage everyone to explore their passion for photography and continue to share their work with others.

Charlie Riedel is a staff photographer with the Associated Press and, through national and international assignments, has received recognition and numerous awards for his editorial and creative photographs. Among those are images from the Olympics, Gulf Coast oil spill, hurricane Katrina, World Trade Center attacks, Kentucky Derby, and Super Bowl. His work has been named to several "Photos of the Year" compilations, including that of *Time Magazine*, and he was recently inducted into the Kansas Photojournalism Hall of Fame.