

# 2024-2025 Five State Juror's Statement

As a working photographer, I find it quite interesting to see what amateur shooters think is their best work and are willing to enter in a competition. As the judge of the Five-State this year, I found that curiosity in play.

Whenever judging such a competition, I look through all the entries first, attempting to gauge the quality level presented, and then try to bring fairness and as much objectivity as possible to my selections. While there are some beautiful and thoughtful images here, I felt the overall technical quality of many of the photographs was lacking.

A good photograph results from the blending of technical skill, artistic vision, and emotional impact. In other words: Light, Composition, and Moment. Sometimes you have one of these elements, sometimes two, and if you're lucky, all three of these are present. As photographers, we all must strive to incorporate those elements into our images.

Like most crafts, photography requires a certain mastery, and while I don't expect the entrants to be on the same level as pros, I do expect some of these skills to be on display. Those images that rose to the top displayed just such skills.

Some of my favorites:

~ **1<sup>st</sup> place Nature** (*Misty Morning* by Christine Chandler) - This is a beautiful image which evokes a visceral reaction; you can almost feel yourself there. That's what you want your viewers to have-a visceral reaction.

~ **2<sup>nd</sup> place Nature** (*Fox Tail Barley* by Patricia Herman) - Lovely technique using a longer shutter to allow the motion from the wind to create a very painterly effect. And look at the beautiful color palette that nature brings to the table.

~ **3<sup>rd</sup> place Nature** (*Flamingo in Repose* by Sheila Glencer) - Nice seeing on the part of the photographer. That's always what I'm looking for in an image of excellence: "what did the photographer bring to this shot?".

~ **4<sup>th</sup> place Nature** (*Venation Depiction* by Jana Stoebeck) - This is all about light and texture. Black and white is perfect for this image.

~ **1<sup>st</sup> place People** (*Zach* by Max Bowyer) - What struck me about this image was its simplicity and documentary nature. I thought of Mary Ellen Mark (famous photographer) when I saw this photograph.

~ **2<sup>nd</sup> place People** (*Penny* by Henry Farthing) - Very candid, having a fly-on-the-wall sensibility, this is the kind of image that photojournalists love to find. And the perspective works nicely here.

~ **3<sup>rd</sup> place People** (*Main Street Ed* by Steve Hauck) - While I don't normally respond well to most double exposures, I found myself returning over and over to this image. I had a visceral reaction to it and I think the size relationship of the two images works perfectly.

~ **4<sup>th</sup> place People** (*Many Stories* by Lee Ann Stamm) - This image of hands and the book tells a simple story, and the use of black and white works nicely. I would have liked to see a better print, as a print with more depth would have even more power.

~ **1<sup>st</sup> place Open** (*Emerald Waves* by Linda Hamlin) Light, composition and moment were on display here, though it was a quiet moment (which is fine). The print was one of the best in the show. Whether we like it or not, post-production (Photoshop, Lightroom, darkroom, etc.) is a vital part of every great photograph. Don't forget about that part of the process.

~ **2<sup>nd</sup> place Open** (*Moon Shot* by Tony Cook) - I like the simplicity and composition of this. It raises some questions about exactly what I'm looking at, but that's ok. A complete caption would answer that question, and I've always been a big fan of words and pictures working together.

~ **3<sup>rd</sup> place Open** (*Precious Feet* by Brenda Heard) - Kind of hard to beat the subject matter-tiny feet. Nice composition. Still, a better print would have made this a stronger image.

~ **4<sup>th</sup> place Open** (*Lone Star* by Charles Miller) - Good seeing on the part of the photographer. There are many ways this could have shot, the choice to keep it simple and play the light off of the dark works really well.

The juror's merit images were all pretty nice, with photographers showing some understanding of the light, composition, moment trifecta.

I'd like to thank the Hays Arts Council for entrusting me with this assignment. It was a pleasure and honor to have judged the Five-State this year.

~Dan White, November, 2024

**Dan White** is an internationally published and Pulitzer-Prize winning photographer with a photojournalistic perspective that permeates his commercial, editorial, and artistic images. It was while working at the Kansas City Star that he was part of the Pulitzer Prize-winning staff recognized for its coverage of the collapse of the Hyatt Hotel skywalks. Dan continues his thirty-year career as a commercial fine art photographer based in Kansas City and was recently inducted into the Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame.