

Division Definitions

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Pictorial Image (/pictorial-image)

Nature (/nature)

Photo Travel (/photo-travel)

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These entries have been updated to apply to all PSA recognized exhibitions in 2024, and for all internal PSA competitions with immediate effect.

Image Creation and Authorship

In all sections of an exhibition, images must originate as photographs made by the entrant. Entrants may not incorporate images or image elements authored by anyone else (for example Photoshop replacement skies or textures, clipart or stock images), and there is zero tolerance for plagiarism. Editing or alteration of images is only permitted within the limits specified in the Division Definitions.

Statement on Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Images created by image creation software (frequently called 'AI' images) are not allowed in any exhibition, social media, event, or publication governed by the PSA, other than for editorial purposes. Any person submitting an AI generated image (in whole or in part) that does not begin with a photograph from the maker shall be prohibited from PSA activities for a minimum of 3 years to life.

Statement on Subject Matter – applicable to all sections

The fundamental rule that must be observed at all times and applies to all sections offered in exhibitions with PSA recognition is that the welfare of living creatures is more important than any photograph. This means that practices such as baiting of subjects with a living creature and removal of birds from nests, for the purpose of obtaining a photograph, are highly unethical, and such photographs are not allowed in any exhibition with PSA recognition. Under no circumstances may a living creature be placed in a situation where it will be killed, injured or stressed for the purpose of obtaining a photograph. Images that show live creatures being fed to captive animals, birds or reptiles are not permitted under any circumstances.

There are also concerns about the use of aerial photography, drones, helicopters, low flying aircraft. These should not cause any interference with other individuals or animals which causes a disturbance in their normal activity or disrupt the way any individuals or animals interact with their environment. Entrants in PSA recognized exhibitions must comply with all relevant laws and regulations, associated with aerial photography, in the country in which the image was taken.

Similar Images: Identical or similar Images shall not be allowed in the same section or different sections of the same exhibition as determined by the judges or exhibition chair. Similar images are those which are practically equivalent, as defined on this page: <https://psa-services.org/pdf/Practical-Equivalence.pdf> 'Be advised: while similar images may be entered in different exhibitions, these images and acceptances may be disallowed by the separate review process associated with applications for stars, diamonds and galaxies. To avoid disappointment, do not enter images that are practically equivalent.'

Two images are considered practical equivalents unless two of the following parameters vary between the images

- Noticeable change in camera position on: examples of a camera position change include high angle vs low angle, pan, tilt or tracking shots, etc.
- Noticeable subject movement: a subject's movement may be slight (a head movement) but must be obvious. This parameter may also apply to inanimate subject matter (arrangement of subjects in a lightbox)
- Noticeable change of compositional or design elements: this includes a wide variety of possible changes, from lighting and lines to spaces and shapes
- Story-telling sequences: Can apply to any Division. For example, in PJD and ND story-telling sequences are captured by multiple images (change of facial expression or emotion, animal interactions, foraging, etc)

Monochrome Definition

An image is considered to be Monochrome only if it gives the impression of having no color (i.e. contains only shades of grey which can include pure black and pure white) OR it gives the impression of being a greyscale image that has been toned in one color across the entire image. (For example, by sepia, red, gold, etc.) A greyscale or multi-colored image modified or giving the impression of having been modified by partial toning, multi-toning or by the inclusion of spot coloring does not meet the definition of monochrome and shall be classified as a Color Work.

Attention is drawn to the PSA Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter which apply to all sections.

Color versus Monochrome (Black and White)

Within PSA international exhibitions an image is either monochrome or color; there is no third option.

- A **Color** image is defined by the presence of more than a single color or hue. If an image is treated with two or more colors in any manner or any amount (spot coloring, duotone, etc), it is a color image.
- A **monochrome** image is defined by the presence of exactly one color or hue; it can display unlimited variations in that single color's intensity, tints, and shades but may not include additional colors (partial toning, split-toning, spot coloring, etc). Black and white images (also referred to as grayscale) are considered monochrome, though technically they are achromatic images which may span the full tonal range from black to white. Monochrome images may not be entered in color sections of PPD or PID.

Pictorial Image Division

The subject matter is unrestricted for PID images in separate color and monochrome (see above for Monochrome definition) classes. There may be a theme specified for some PSA-recognized PID exhibitions and the exhibition's definition of the theme should be consulted. Each class has its own Star Ratings path.

Attention is drawn to the PSA Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter which apply to all sections.

Photo Travel Division

A Photo Travel image is a portrayal of the real world we live in, as it is found naturally. There are no geographic limitations.

Content guidance: (Applicable up to December 31, 2025)

1. If the image is predominantly or exclusively a land-, sea- or cityscape, these "scapes" must include characteristic and distinctive physical features, although it is not necessary that the image identify the exact location;
2. Images that predominantly or exclusively depict people and their activities must illustrate a distinctive culture of a country, region, or continent;
3. Images that predominately or exclusively depict animal populations are allowed, if the animals are in their native environment and are characteristic of that country, region, or continent;
4. Portraits or other close-ups of people or objects, in addition to meeting the above paragraphs as applicable, must include elements depicting some of the surrounding environment to make it obvious that the image was not taken in a studio setting;
5. Images from events or activities arranged for photography, or of subjects directed or hired for photography, are **NOT** allowed.
6. Time exposures are allowed, if they do not dominate the image as a special effect (star trails, for example, are a

dominating effect).

Highly distorted images such as those produced by fish eye lenses are **NOT** allowed.

Photo Travel Division Documentary PTDD: (*Applicable starting January 1, 2026*)

A Photo Travel image is a portrayal of the real world we live in, as it is found naturally. There are no geographic limitations.

Content guidance

1. Images that predominantly or exclusively depict **people** and their activities must illustrate a distinctive culture of a country, region, or continent.
2. If the image predominantly or exclusively depicts a **place**, such as land-, sea- or cityscape, or a physical structure such as a building or monument, it must include characteristic and distinctive physical features. It is not necessary that the image identify the exact location.
3. Images that predominately or exclusively depict **animal** populations are allowed, if the animals are in their native environment and are characteristic of that country, region, or continent.
4. **Portraits** or other close-ups of people or objects, in addition to meeting the above paragraphs as applicable, must include elements depicting some of the surrounding environment to make it obvious that the image was not taken in a studio setting.
5. Images from **events or activities** arranged exclusively for photography, or of subjects directed or hired for photography, are **NOT** allowed. Images from public events such as festivals or historic re-enactments are allowed.
6. **Long exposures** are allowed if the image looks natural. If the long exposure produces a dominating and unnatural special effect on the image, then it is NOT allowed (examples are star trails and long light trails).
7. **Highly distorted images** such as those produced by fisheye lenses are **NOT** allowed.

Editing guidance:

Processing or editing must be limited to making the image look as close to the original scene as possible, except that conversion to grayscale monochrome is allowed.

Photo Travel Division World in Focus PTDW: (*Applicable starting January 1, 2026*)

Definition of "World in focus"

Just as travel and tourism pictures, this section englobes the full range of photographic genres from architecture, culture, events, food, landscape, portraits, etc.

A "WORLD IN FOCUS" image expresses the spirit of an era, the essence of a place or of a culture whether it is shown in an authentic scene or whether it is arranged. Digital manipulation to optimise an image in terms of finetuning of levels and colors is allowed as long as the image is looking natural. The same counts for removal of dust or digital noise.

Techniques that add, relocate, replace, or remove any element of the original image, except by cropping, are not permitted.

Editing Guidelines for Photo Travel Division:

Processing or editing must be limited to making the image look as close to the original scene as possible, except that conversion to grayscale monochrome is allowed.

Allowed editing techniques:

- Cropping, straightening and perspective correction.
- Removal or correction of elements added by the camera or lens, such as dust spots, noise, chromatic aberration and lens distortion.
- Global and selective adjustments such as brightness, hue, saturation and contrast to restore the appearance of the original scene.
- Complete conversion of color images to grayscale monochrome.
- Blending of multiple images of the same subject and combining them in camera or with software (exposure blending or focus stacking)
- Image stitching – combining multiple images with overlapping fields of view that are taken consecutively (panoramas)

Editing techniques that are not allowed:

- Removing, adding to, moving or changing any part of an image, except for cropping and straightening.
- Adding a vignette during processing.
- Blurring parts of the image during processing to hide elements in the original scene.
- Darkening parts of the image during processing to hide elements in the original scene.
- All conversions other than to complete grayscale monochrome.
- Conversion of parts of an image to monochrome, or partial toning, desaturation or over-saturation of color

Attention is drawn to the PSA Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter which apply to all sections.

Nature Division

PSA/FIAP Nature Definition

Nature photography records all branches of natural history except anthropology and archaeology. This includes all aspects of the physical world, both over water and underwater. Nature images must convey the truth of the scene. A well-informed person should be able to identify the subject of the image and be satisfied that it has been presented honestly and that no unethical practices have been used to control the subject or capture the image. Images that directly or indirectly show any human activity threatening a living organism's life or welfare are not allowed.

The most important part of a Nature image is the nature story it tells. High technical standards are expected and the image must look natural.

Objects created by humans, and evidence of human activity, are allowed in Nature images only when they are a necessary part of the Nature story.

Photographs of human-created hybrid plants, cultivated plants, feral animals, domesticated animals, human-created hybrid animals, and mounted or preserved zoological specimens are not allowed.

Photographs made where the scene is natural and the animal is unharmed in a carefully managed environment, such as Zoo, rescue centers, and ethically managed natural environment farms are permitted.

Attracting or controlling subjects through the use of food or sound for the purpose of photographing them is not allowed. Maintained situations such as provided supplemental food due to hardship caused by weather conditions or other conditions beyond the animals' control, where photography is incidental to the feeding of the animal does not fall under this provision.

Controlling live subjects by chilling, anesthetic, or any other method of restricting natural movement for a photograph is not allowed.

Human-made elements shall be permitted under the following circumstances:

- a) When they are an integral part of the nature story, such as a songbird singing atop a fence post, a manmade object used as nest material, or a weather phenomenon destroying a man-made structure.
- b) When they are a small but unavoidable part of the scene, such as an unobtrusive footprint or track in the background.
- c) Scientific tags, collars, and bands are specifically allowed.

When photographing at a zoo, sanctuary, or rehabilitation center, it would be construed that the photographer ensured that it's properly accredited and conforms to best practices.

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

In addition to the restrictions on Nature photography, to be eligible for any Wildlife award images must meet the following conditions:

- (a) Zoological organisms must be living free and unrestrained in a natural habitat of their own choosing
- (b) Images of zoological organisms that have been removed from their natural habitat, are in any form of captivity, or are being controlled by humans for the purpose of photography are not allowed.
- (c) Botanical organisms may not be removed from their natural environment for the purpose of photography.
- (d) Images that have been staged for the purpose of photography are not allowed.

Attention is drawn to the PSA Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter which apply to all sections.

Nature Editing Guidelines:

Processing or editing must be limited to making the image look as close to the original scene as possible, except that conversion to grayscale monochrome is allowed.

Allowed editing techniques:

- Cropping, straightening and perspective correction.
- Removal or correction of elements added by the camera or lens, such as dust spots, noise, chromatic aberration and lens distortion.
- Global and selective adjustments such as brightness, hue, saturation and contrast to restore the appearance of the original scene.
- Complete conversion of color images to grayscale monochrome.
- Blending of multiple images of the same subject and combining them in camera or with software (exposure blending or focus stacking)
- Image stitching – combining multiple images with overlapping fields of view that are taken consecutively (panoramas)

Editing techniques that are not allowed:

- Removing, adding to, moving or changing any part of an image, except for cropping and straightening.
- Adding a vignette during processing.
- Blurring parts of the image during processing to hide elements in the original scene.
- Darkening parts of the image during processing to hide elements in the original scene.
- All conversions other than to complete grayscale monochrome.
- Conversion of parts of an image to monochrome, or partial toning, desaturation or over-saturation of color

Attention is drawn to the PSA Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter which apply to all sections.

Photojournalism Division

Photojournalism Entries Are:

- images with informative content and emotional impact
- reflecting the human presence in our world
- The journalistic (story-telling) value of the image receives priority over pictorial quality
- Images that misrepresent the truth, such as those from events or activities arranged specifically for photography or of subjects directed or hired for photography, are not eligible

Editing Guidelines for PJ:

Processing or editing is limited to making the image look as close to the original scene as possible, or complete conversion to greyscale monochrome.

Allowed Editing Techniques:

- Cropping, straightening and perspective correction
- Removal or correction of elements added by the camera or lens, such as dust spots, noise, chromatic aberration or lens distortion
- Global and selective adjustments such as brightness, hue, saturation and contrast to restore the integrity of the original scene.
- Several images (typically 2-4), each with a small white border, combined into a single image that depicts a progression of events or related activity.

Editing Techniques That Are Not Allowed:

- Removing, adding, moving or changing any part of an image, except for the eligible techniques
- Blurring or darkening parts of the image during processing to obscure elements in the original scene
- Partial color or partial toning
- Unnatural color, extreme saturation or desaturation

If a Human Interest award or section is offered:

When Human Interest is specified, those images depict a person or persons in an interactive, emotional or unusual situation, excluding sports action.

PSA Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter apply to all sections.

Pictorial Print Division

Prints may be in color or monochrome (see the definition for Monochrome on top of page). Digital capture, film photography, desktop and darkroom processing, and commercial prints are all included in the division's activities. The content or subject matter of an image submitted to a PPD program or activity is unrestricted. There may be a theme specified for some PSA-recognized PPD exhibitions and the exhibition's definition of the theme should be consulted. The prints are divided into four classes, Large Color, Large Monochrome, Small Color, and Small Monochrome. There are two Star paths – Color and Monochrome.

Attention is drawn to the PSA Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter which apply to all sections.

3D Division

The content or subject matter of an image submitted to a 3DD program or activity is unrestricted. There may be a theme specified for some PSA-recognized 3DD exhibitions and the exhibition's definition of the theme should be consulted.

Attention is drawn to the PSA Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter which apply to all sections.

Editing Guidelines 2026

MATRIX OF EDITING TECHNIQUES (2026) permitted [✓] prohibited [X] no restrictions [NR]	reality divisions			3DD	PID/PPD
	ND	PTD	PJD		
a) Cropping, straightening and perspective correction.	✓	✓	✓	NR	NR
b) Removing or correcting elements added by the camera or lens (dust spots, noise, chromatic aberration, lens distortion).	✓	✓	✓	NR	NR
c) Global and selective adjustments such as brightness, hue, saturation and contrast to restore the appearance of the original scene.	✓	✓	✓	NR	NR
d) Complete conversion of color images to monochrome grayscale.	✓	✓	✓	NR	NR
e) Using permitted AI-enhanced editing (see Note 1 below).	✓	✓	✓	NR	NR
f) Image stitching – combining multiple images with overlapping fields of view that are taken consecutively (panoramas).	✓	✓	✓	NR	NR
g) Blending of multiple images of the same subject and combining them in camera or with software (exposure blending or focus stacking).	✓	✓	X	NR	NR
h) Combining images (2-4), each with a small white border on a single image that depicts a progression of events or related activity.	X	X	✓	NR	NR
i) Adding, deleting or moving pictorial elements of which you ARE the author.	X	X	X	NR	NR
j) Removing, adding, or changing any part of an image, except for cropping and straightening.	X	X	X	NR	NR
k) Blurring or darkening parts of the image to hide pictorial elements, or adding a noticeable (dark or light) vignette during editing.	X	X	X	NR	NR
l) All color conversions other than to monochrome grayscale.	X	X	X	NR	NR
m) Conversion of parts of an image to monochrome, or partial toning, desaturation or over-saturation of color.	X	X	X	NR	NR
n) Using prohibited AI-enhanced editing (see note 2 below).	X	X	X	X	X
o) Adding pictorial elements of which you ARE NOT the author, such as sky, background, people, animals, etc. Refer to the PSA statement on Image Creation and Authorship.	X	X	X	X	X
p) Adding a watermark, copyright or any similar visible markings.	X	X	X	X	X

- Permitted AI-enhanced editing:** includes editing tools that perform transformations, enhancements, or corrections based exclusively on the existing pixel data captured in the author's original photograph without introducing externally-sourced content.
- Prohibited AI-enhanced editing:** includes any AI-assisted processes for synthetic image generation that incorporate external image data, visual elements, textures, objects, or scenes not originally present in the author's photograph are prohibited.

Outpainting tools (generative fill) which allow you to expand a cropped image using a context-aware extension of the original photo are permitted, unless restricted by the Division's definition. Other generative AI tools that generate new synthetic visual content based on external image data not originally present in the author's photograph are prohibited, regardless of how small the edited area. Any person who violates this AI rule shall be banned from PSA exhibitions for a period ranging from 3 years to permanent exclusion.

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