

PHOTOGRAPHY

2026 COMPETITION GUIDE

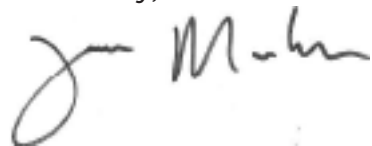
It's your moment to shine!
Enter today.

For more than 170 years the California State Fair has been a constant showcase of the talents and achievements of the people of California. Entering into the California State Fair's 2026 Competitive Exhibits Program allows you the opportunity to showcase your abilities, and revel in your accomplishments!

The California State Fair's friendly competitions are designed to acknowledge the best of the Golden State. Our Competitive Programs inspire talented Californians, as well as highlight the latest advances in technology, agriculture, and industry.

More than 750,000 visitors are expected at the State Fair this summer. Your work is an integral part of the State's celebration, and we look forward to seeing your talents on display during the annual State Fair from July 17 to August 2.

We encourage you to enter today and begin making lasting memories for yourself, and for the hundreds of thousands of State Fair patrons! Sincerely,



Tom Martinez
Chief Executive Officer

GOVERNOR

GAVIN NEWSOM

CALIFORNIA STATE FAIR

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California Agriculture Fair Season



It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2025 California fair season!

From the first fair of the season in February to the last in late October, fairgrounds across the state are busy planning for one of the largest events of the year. These annual fair events have so much to offer.

At the fair, you can expect to find the traditional corn dogs, cotton candy, and carnival rides. In addition to these delicious treats and fun entertainment, you can also enjoy competitions, exhibitions, and educational activities. Your participation as exhibitors helps promote the importance of agriculture and food production throughout our state.

Aside from the annual fair, California fairgrounds remain busy hosting a variety of other events throughout the year. Most of these events are fun and festive celebrations that represent the culture and diversity of the communities that surround the fairgrounds. However, our fairgrounds are also amongst the first to serve in times of despair during emergencies and evacuations.

As resiliency centers, our fairgrounds provide safe shelter and build community preparedness as hazards like wildfires, floods and extreme heat become longer lasting and more frequent in California. During disasters, the fairgrounds offer a place to stay with kitchen and sanitation facilities, showers, and other resources.

Our fairgrounds are so important for our communities and so are exhibitors and advocates like you! Thank you for your many contributions to the continued success of the fairgrounds.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Gavin Newsom.

GAVIN NEWSOM



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
FOOD & AGRICULTURE
Karen Ross, Secretary

January 8, 2025

On behalf of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, a warm welcome to you as we all prepare for the exciting 2025 fair season! We are thrilled you are joining us this year and sincerely thank you for your continued involvement in showcasing your products, livestock, and expertise. Your contributions help make our fairs successful and provide an invaluable experience for our communities.

Fairs play an essential role in connecting food and agriculture with the public. They are not only a time for us to celebrate the fruits of our labor, but also serve as a critical platform for educating future generations about the importance of farming and food production, livestock management, and sustainable practices. Through your participation, you directly contribute to the appreciation of the vital role agriculture plays in our lives and foster an understanding of the tremendous diversity, innovation and new technology that create new opportunities in agriculture and our rural communities.

The fairgrounds are not just a venue for the annual events. Throughout the year, they serve as a hub for various interim activities that support local economies, offer educational programming, and foster community engagement. From hosting agricultural workshops and livestock sales to providing facilities for regional competitions and cultural festivals, the fairgrounds contribute to the vibrancy and resilience of our agricultural community. Additionally, they play an important role in emergency preparedness, providing a space for disaster response and recovery efforts during critical situations, such as flooding or extreme weather events.

We understand the dedication and hard work that goes into preparing for the fair, and we want to express our deep gratitude for your commitment to making each fair season a success. Your participation ensures the continued relevance of our fairs and strengthens the agricultural ties that bind us all together as a community.

We look forward to this fair season and its great success!

Yours truly,

Karen Ross
Secretary



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Please visit the following link for rules online:	
https://castatefair.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/2026-General-Rules.pdf	

***This book is still being updated as more details are being finalized. Please keep checking back for the most up to date information. Thank you!**



IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO KNOW

Contact: Katie Kiselyova
Photography Coordinator
Phone: (916) 607-4273 & E-mail: fineart@calexpo.com

Entry Dates:

PHOTOGRAPHY	
January 22	Entries Open registration online
May 8	Entries Close online 4:30 PM & entry fees must be paid & images uploaded
May 15	Accepted artwork announcement
May 29	Shipped artworks & shipping form due 4:30 PM
May 29 - May 30	Hand deliver accepted artworks with attached entry tag, Expo Center Building #7, 9AM - 5PM
June 26	Artist's statement & Artist's Resume due by email
July 17	Exhibition Opens. Award results posted online.
July 26	Awards ceremony in Expo Center Building #7
August 2	Exhibition Closes
August 7 - 8	Pick up artwork & awards, Expo Center Building #7, 9AM - 5PM
August 14	Shipped artwork packed and mailed out by this date

The California State Fair July 17-August 2, 2026

The California State Fair has always been the awe-inspiring showcase of the state's finest, and ever since the first fair in 1854, California has upheld this tradition. People come from all over to witness the competitions and innovations that our exhibitors produce. We continue to add new and exciting competitions to our competitive programs to showcase California's very best!

Why enter the competition?

The Photography Competition is the perfect place to showcase your photography skills and talent. Photographs will be juried by well-respected professionals and will be competing against other amazing photographers like yourself. Entries selected for the show can be marked for sale at the time of sign up. Your entry could earn you the prized golden bear trophy and a cash award!



COMPETITION OVERVIEW



The California State Fair Photography Competition is open to all adult photographers who will compete for a chance at cash awards, a golden bear trophy, and the opportunity to showcase their work during the 17 days of the fair.

Who Can Enter & Entry Fee

\$12.00 per artwork

1. Artists entering the competition must be residents of the State of California, who have reached 18 years of age as of January 1, 2026.
2. Entries must be original photographs created by the artist entering the competition and **cannot** include any element created or significantly altered using Artificial Intelligence (AI). Photographs must have been taken within the past two years. The year the photograph was completed must be included as part of the online entry process.
3. An artist may enter an unlimited amount of photographs.
4. Photographs previously accepted into any California State Fair competitive program may not be re-entered. Same or identical items cannot be entered and/or exhibited more than once in a California State Fair competitive program or in more than one competitive Division or Class.
5. This is an “open” juried show. Entries are not required to have won a previous competition (County Fair or other juried show).

Entry Deadline

All entries must be registered online, with an image of your entry uploaded, and all entry fees paid at CaStateFair.com/Photography/ by 4:30 pm, May 8, 2026. Late entries will not be allowed.

How to Enter

Go to CaStateFair.com/Photography/ and click on the Photography icon under the competitions page and follow the instructions. Use a Visa or Mastercard to pay entry fee.

By entering your work into the California State Fair's Competition, you the exhibitor:

1. Agree to grant the California State Fair license to display, reproduce, and distribute your image in whole or in part as needed. For example: on display, online, archival, future promotion of the competition, educational, etc.
2. Guarantee the entry or entries submitted are original creations and you are the sole owner and creator of the entry or entries.
3. Are responsible for model release and permissions.

Please take a moment to look through this Competition Guide to see which competition your entry is eligible to compete in.

Note that online sessions expire after 20 minutes of inactivity, so “save the cart” if you plan on leaving the computer for more than 20 minutes.

The California State Fair uses ShoWorks, an online entry program. ShoWorks is an industry standard and is used by over 50 fairs nationally. This user-friendly program can be trusted to accurately enter you into our competitions and allows for efficient communications via e-mail.

- a. Names, titles, addresses, etc. will be used exactly as entered for award tags and payment of award premiums. Please pay special attention to include proper spelling, capitalization, full names of cities/counties, no abbreviations and the correct mailing address.
- b. Descriptions may not contain personally identifying information. List materials, techniques used only, and size of frame or canvas.
- c. Location: Please list the city, town, country, providence, etc, of where the photo was taken in the description.

You **MUST** upload a photograph(s) of your photography item to complete your entry. Entries are “Accepted” for delivery by Judges using these image files.

After payment of fees within ShoWorks, a box will appear with a notification.

- a. Click “**Upload Files**” button.

- b. Confirm that the Division and Class across the top of the window are correct for the entry image files being submitted.
- c. Click “**Choose File**” and choose a saved file from your computer. Click “**Open**”
- d. Confirm that the thumbnail to the right of the title is the correct photo and Click “**Upload.**”
- e. When progress bar reads “**100%**” and “**Upload Complete,**” click the “**next**” button.
- f. If you have another entry, continue to upload required photos by repeating steps.
- g. When all images are uploaded, click “**Done.**”
- h. If after you have finished and quit, you discover you have uploaded the wrong image file(s) you can log back into “**My Account**” and select “**View/Print transactions made by the Exhibitor**” and select the “**Upload Files**” button. The second upload to an entry will replace the initial image with the newly uploaded file.

Photo Upload Guidelines

Preparing Your Images to Upload Online: Please follow these requirements when preparing your images for submission. Images not conforming to the desired formats and requirements listed below will not be allowed to upload.

Acceptable image formats are .jpg, .gif, .bmp, .png, .tiff only.

- 4. The total file size of the uploaded image must be less than 7 MB.
- 5. If your total image file size is greater than 7 MB, you will need to use a photo editing program to resize the photo image. Free programs available: Microsoft Image Resizer, Microsoft Photo Editor, Picasa, Irfanview, Photoscape, and others.
- 6. A short title for your photo entry is required. The title cannot be greater than 50 characters.
- 7. For advanced entrants familiar with using a photo editing program: Your images must be the RGB color format. CMYK files will not upload properly.
- 8. Do not upload signed or watermarked photos.
- 9. Do not use a mobile phone to upload photos.

Accepted Entries

1. Accepted entries must be delivered to the California State Fair. See Entry Dates calendar (page 6) for delivery dates, times and location.
2. Accepted entries must have their entry tag on the back of their work. Please check the email associated with your account for access to the entry tags.
3. Accepted photographs should be ready to display with a wire on the back for hanging.
4. Accepted entries must be presented professionally: framed (No glass if shipping the entry), canvas, or metal. Solitary matted work without a frame will not be accepted.
5. Entries must be an accurate representation of the submitted digital image.
6. Entries arriving at the California State Fair after Delivery and Shipping Deadlines are disqualified from display and prizes forfeited.
7. The California State Fair reserves the option of not showing any entry which is improperly prepared, unsafe for public display, or inappropriate for family-friendly viewing.

8. Optional content:

Artist Statements consist of 125 words or less about the accepted photograph(s). These artist statements are to be submitted as a word document, using Helvetica 12pt font. All submission must be in a Microsoft Word document. The statements will be in an Artists' statement binder for exhibitors to learn more about the work on display.

Due: June 26, 2026, to fineart@calexpo.com.

Artist Resumes will be made available to the public during the exhibition and exhibitors are reminded to not include private or confidential information in this document. Artist Resumes are optional, must be no more than one page Microsoft Word document, in Helvetica 12pt font.

Due: June 26, 2026, to fineart@calexpo.com.

Non-Accepted Entries

1. Non-Accepted entries are those who have not been chosen for display by Jurors.
2. If you receive a non-accepted notification, thank you for competing, there are no further actions needed.

RULES & REQUIREMENTS

Digital photographs of all entries must be uploaded at the time of entry. After preliminary judging, exhibitors will be notified if their entry is accepted. Accepted entries are to be delivered to the California State Fair for the second round of judging. See Entry Dates (**page 6**).

Identical items **cannot** be entered into more than one Division, Class, or State Fair competition.

All content must be family appropriate and safe for display at the Fair.

Special Notes on a resolution for photo printing:

It is recommended that shooting be done in the largest capture resolution for optimal print quality. The higher resolution will be for print value not digital.

Remember: if you take a large file photo, you can always make the image smaller to fit the online submission requirements.

Preparing Accepted Entry for Delivery

1. Photographs may be printed on photo paper. Do not deliver entries on mat board. Acceptable display methods: Framed, canvas, or metal.
2. All photographs must be ready for display with a hanging wire on the back.
3. Photo Size: Must not exceed 108" x 108"/9' by 9'. This includes frame size.
4. No rolled-up entries will be displayed. Photographs must be shipped/delivered flat.
5. Entries will be hung with hanging wire affixed to the back of the photograph.
6. Please have your entry tag printed and attached to the back side of your entry. The entry tag will be e-mailed to you with your acceptance into the show.



Disclaimers

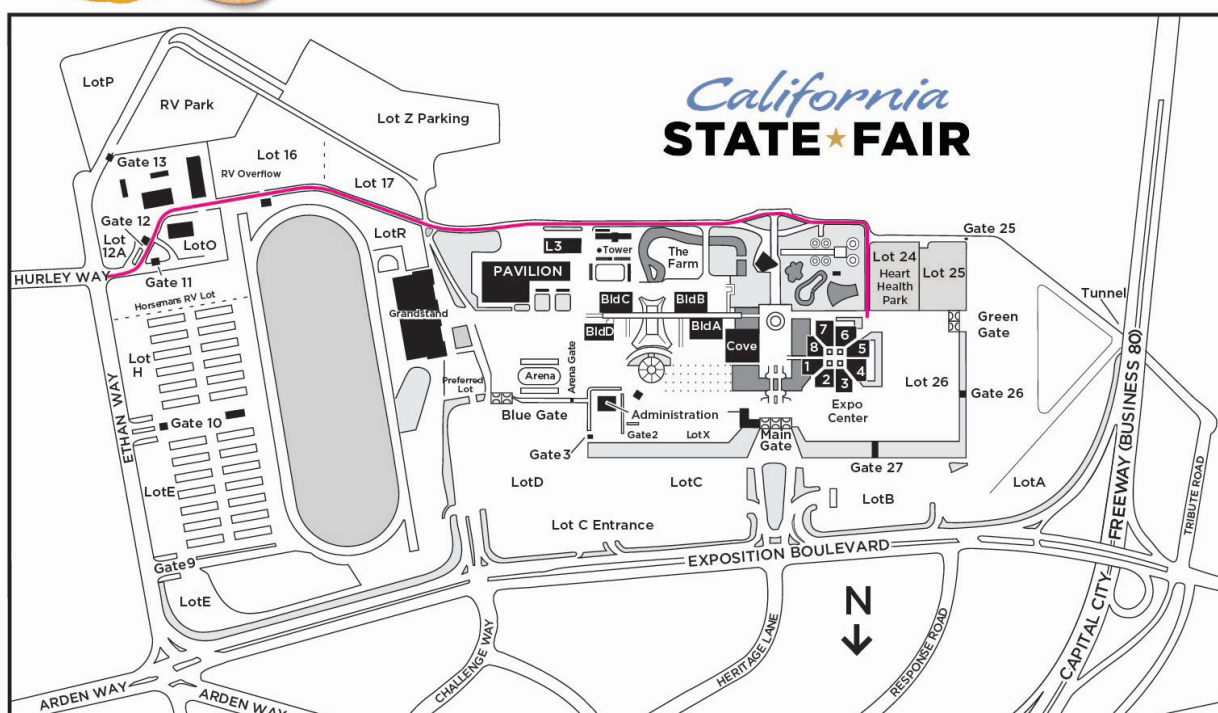
Although care and diligence will be exercised in the course of receiving and handling entries, the California State Fair is not responsible for any technical malfunctions, failures, omission, interruption or defect of any entries. Nor are we responsible for entries that are not received in accordance with deadline rules due to a computer or electronic malfunction or other reason. The exhibitors shall hold the State Fair and its officers harmless and indemnify them against any legal proceedings arising from such accident or loss.

1. Insurance is the responsibility of the exhibitor. The California State Fair does not insure exhibits and is not responsible for any loss, damage or theft of entries even if the loss, damage, or theft occurs as the result of the handling of the exhibit by staff, volunteers, contractors and/or visitors.
2. Photographs are taken in the California Photography Building during the Fair. These photographs are used for publicity purposes and archives. By submitting an entry, exhibitors are giving the California State Fair permission to use such photographs at their discretion without compensation to, or prior approval from, the exhibitor.
3. Entry fees are **non-refundable** regardless of acceptance into the show.

DELIVERY, SHIPPING, & PICK UP

Hand Delivery & Pick-up:

1. Hand delivered, accepted artworks may be delivered to Cal Expo Fairgrounds, **Expo Center, Building 7** (see map) only between the hours of **9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.** on either **Friday, May 29 or Saturday, May 30, 2026**. For directions to the Expo Center Buildings and the California Fine Art & Photography Exhibit Hall, see below:



Directions:

- Enter California State Fairgrounds via **Gate 12 at the intersection of Ethan & Hurley Way**
 - Follow the access road, and turn right after the Water Park.
 - Expo Center is the set of tall concrete buildings directly ahead. Park anywhere along the back fence or notify staff if you need assistance unloading.
2. Artists are required to attach a physical copy of any corresponding entry tags for artwork that is accepted into the show. Please check the email

associated with your account for access to the entry tags.

3. Artists are responsible for the unloading and loading of artwork. If the artwork is of a size and bulk requiring special equipment for unloading, please contact the California Photography Coordinator prior to drop-off date.
4. Pick-up all unsold, hand-delivered entries from Expo Center Building 7 only between the hours of **9:00 am** and **5:00 p.m.** on **Friday, August 7 and Saturday, August 8, 2026**. Must have claim check and a photo ID.
5. If someone other than the artist will be picking up an entry, they must bring a physical, signed letter of authorization from the artist for the CA State Fair to keep on file. No exceptions.
6. **Artwork not picked up by artist will be donated or recycled after September 1, 2026.**

Shipped Entries

1. Shipped accepted entries must arrive at the California State Fairgrounds no later than **Friday, May 29, 2026**.
2. Mail or ship **“Accepted”** entries to:
California State Fair
California Photography Competition
Administration Building
1600 Exposition Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95815
3. All shipped artworks must be sent prepaid and accompanied by our Shipping Form which requires information regarding return shipping. **Return shipping must be prepaid or include a shipping account via UPS or Fed Ex and include required paperwork with shipped artwork. No stamps will be accepted.**
4. Insurance is the responsibility of the artist.
5. The California State Fair reserves the right to return shipped entries by any carrier available. The Fair may, at its discretion, return entries via the original carrier.
6. Shipping containers must be reusable for return shipping purposes. The Fair will not provide any additional packing material. Please label all packing material with artist's name (i.e., bubble-wrap, plastic wrap, etc.)
7. Artist must indicate on the **outside** of the shipping crate/package the **artist's name** and **the class** in which the artwork is entered.

8. Written instructions for unpacking and repacking must be included on the outside and/or inside of the container. If enclosed inside, instructions should be the first thing seen when the container is opened.
9. Enclosed documents such as assembly or display instructions should be in an envelope and clearly marked as “documents” and labeled with their contents.
10. Shipped entries must be packed securely. Framed two- dimensional artworks must have Plexiglass instead of glass if being shipped. Artists assume all responsibility for the condition of their entry and the quality of the shipping containers.
11. Shipped or mailed entries will be packed and mailed out by August 14, 2025.
12. Undeliverable shipped or mailed artworks returned to the California State Fair will be donated or recycled on September 1, 2026.



JUDGING

There will be two rounds of judging.

FIRST ROUND

1. First round is online, and entries will be juried from digital images for acceptance into the exhibition and invited to be delivered on May 29 - May 30, 2026. Results of this judging will be published on our website, **CaStateFair.com/Competition** and click on the **California Photography** icon on the competitions page.

A list of accepted artworks arranged by Division and Class and listing the title, the entry #, or WEN# and artist's name will be posted to the Photography section on the Competitions page of our website. Results will be posted within five (5) working days after the judging. Results will not be given over the phone.

SECOND ROUND

1. The second round of judging is closed to the public. This will be the judging where awards will be distributed at the jurors' discretion. Any photograph that does not meet the expectations set by the entered digital image(s) or the display requirements will be subject to disqualification.
2. Only those artworks accepted by the jury will be exhibited and only the artworks accepted will be eligible for awards. Approximately 50 artworks will be accepted. A list of accepted artworks in each Division and Class will be posted to our website, CaStateFair.com/Competition. Once artwork is accepted into the show, it may not be removed from the exhibition by the artist or purchaser until after the close of the California State Fair and the exhibition.
3. Judging results will be published on our website, CaStateFair.com/Photography/. Results will be posted online on the opening day of the 2026 California State Fair (July 17, 2026). Results will not be given over the phone.
4. The decisions of the jurors are final. In the tradition of juried art shows, no scorecards or jurors' comments will be delivered to the competitors.

Jury

Jurors are invited to participate on the basis of their qualifications. Preferred jurors are Museum Curators, University or College Art Professors, Gallery Directors, and/or artists recognized as experts in their field or medium. The 2026 jury will be announced on our website: CaStateFair.com.

Judging Criteria

Judging criteria may vary by division. Below is a general overview of the aspects judges will evaluate.

- **Technical Quality** - exposure, white balance, focus, depth of field, etc.
- **Composition** - framing, perspective, leading lines, etc.
- **Lighting** - use of light and shadow to create mood or emphasize subject
- **Creativity** - originality, does the image inspire or evoke a feeling
- **Visual Impact** - overall impression or perspective expressed

AWARDS

The California State Fair will award the following:

BEST IN SHOW AWARD

One of the Juror Awards will be chosen by a majority of the jurors as Best in Show.

Award\$150 plus Golden Bear Award & State Fair Rosette

JUROR AWARD

Three (3) Juror Awards will be selected.

Award (each).....\$75 plus plaque & State Fair Rosette

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

A maximum of fifteen (15) Award of Excellence may be awarded at the discretion of the jurors.

Award (each).....\$50 & State Fair Rosette

AWARD OF MERIT

A maximum of twenty (20) Award of Merit may be awarded at the discretion of the jurors.

Award (each).....\$30 & State Fair Rosette

SPECIAL AWARD

Generous donors, organizations, individuals, and businesses may offer cash or merchandise awards to outstanding photography in specific media or other categories as designated. Additional Special Awards may be added prior to the judging. Check our website CaStateFair.com for updates.

Credential Admission Information

Each exhibitor having one or more of their entries selected for display at the California State Fair shall receive a maximum of one (1) complimentary admission credential at time of delivery. Shipped entries will have their admission credential mailed out by June 5. Parking passes will not be provided.

Art Sales Information

Artists will have the option of placing their artwork for sale. **When setting the price of their artwork, artists are advised to take into consideration the commission**, the cost of framing and/or otherwise preparing their artwork for display, as well as the cost of delivery of their artwork. **A commission of 30% of the purchase price on each artwork sold will be retained.** Sales tax will be charged to these sales, the fair will not ship artwork to buyers, and purchased artwork must be picked up by the buyer. A portion of the commission will be donated to the Friends of the California State Fair Scholarship Fund.

For more information on the Friends of the California State Fair Scholarship Fund or to sign up to become a Friends of Fair Volunteer, please visit CAStateFair.com/Friends-of-the-California-State-Fair.



AWARD SPONSORS 2026

**Sponsors TBA, This section will be updated as more Sponsors sign up.
See 2025 Sponsors below.**



Lucid Winery is an organic winery, tasting room and events center owned by award winning winemaker, Kevin Luther. We are glad to donate wine to the winners!



mikescamera.com

Mike's Camera has donated a \$150 gift card to be awarded to the winner of the Best in Show of the Photography competition and \$50 gift cards to be awarded to the Judges favorite in each of the 3 award tiers.



Midtown Framing is a locally family owned custom picture framing business established in 1993. We specialize in any type of custom picture framing you should need. Midtown Framing also does fine art reproduction and printing. We are happy to support the arts by donating a two hundred dollar gift certificate that is good for any of our services.



The Photographic Society of America wants to recognize the photographic talent in the State of California. Congratulations to this year's award winner on the creation of this exceptional image.

Want to see your logo here? Become a sponsor! To donate an award or make a general contribution to support the CA State Fair Photography Program, please contact us at fineart@calexpo.com.

DIVISIONS & CLASSES

Entry Fee: \$12.00 per entry.

DIVISION 25 - BLACK AND WHITE

- Class 1 - Architecture
- Class 2 - Landscape
- Class 3 - People
- Class 4 - Nature
- Class 5 - Any Other

DIVISION 26 - COLOR

- Class 1 - Architecture
- Class 2 - Landscape
- Class 3 - People
- Class 4 - Nature
- Class 5 - Any Other

DIVISION 27 - DIGITAL MANIPULATION/ALTERNATIVE PROCESSING

- Class 1 - Digital Manipulation/Alternative Processing

Notes on Classes

Class 1 - Architecture can include, but is not limited to: bridges, cityscapes, monuments, and buildings rural or urban, etc.

Class 2 - Landscape can include, but is not limited to: landscapes, skyscapes, seascapes, nightscapes, and waterscapes.

Class 3 - People can include, but is not limited to: action, children, documentary, events, family, fashion, festivals, group, portraits, self-portraits, travel, vacation, etc.

Class 4 - Nature can include, but is not limited to: animals of any kind, insects, flora, macro images, etc.

Class 5 - Any Other can include, but is not limited to: any subject matter that does not fit into any of the preceding classes.

2026 GENERAL RULES

CLICK LINK OR SCAN QR CODE TO VIEW GENERAL RULES ONLINE:

<https://castatefair.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/2026-General-Rules.pdf>

