



FOCUS

IT'S OUR
94TH
SEASON!

Volume 92 - No.8

<https://spsphoto.org/>

May 2026

ANOTHER SEASON COMES TO A CLOSE May 6 - Prints of the Year Competition May 13 - Digital Images of the Year Competition

Another season of The Schenectady Photographic Society comes to a close this month. It has been an enjoyable, informative and entertaining season. We thank each and every member who participated in our competitions and joined us on our Zoom presentations. Without member participation, we could not exist.

I can't stress enough the benefits of participating in a photography club. Personally, I find it motivates me to get out with my camera. I am especially challenged by the Assigned Topic competitions, which encourage me to shoot outside my comfort zone.

As a certified "webinar addict," I have learned something new each and every time I watch a video on photography or post-processing. And I have witnessed other club members whose tal-

ents have progressed substantially by being part of our organization. It's what keeps your Board of Directors motivated to continue the legacy with which we have been charged.

During the summer the Board will meet to formalize the calendar for next season. A part of this will be to schedule Zoom presentations for 2026-2027. Suggestions for presenters are always welcomed. Just remember, we do have budget constraints! Feel free to email me (Linda Tommasulo) with suggestions:

vp@spsphoto.org

Details on our Awards Luncheon can be found on page 4. The winners of Prints of the Year and Digital Images of the Year will be featured in the 2025-2026 Annual Report.

Continued...

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Another Season Comes to a Close	1-3
Invitation: SPS Award Luncheon	4
Focus On: AI Photography Critique/Neil Shapiro	5-7
Learn to See...And Serendipity Will Follow, Essdras Suarez	8-11
April Print Night.....	12
Luba Ricket Creative Competition Night.....	13-14
Field Trips with Janice Prichett	15
SPS Smart Phone Focus Group.....	15
Assigned Topics 2026-2027, 2027-2028	16

THE END IS NEAR!

Like Us on Facebook.....	17
Follow Us on YouTube.....	17
Luba Ricket Creative Competition Winners.....	18-22
April Winning Prints	22-30
April Winning Digital	31-37
About SPS & Board of Directors.....	38
2025-2026 Season Judges.....	39
2025-2026 Season Calendar.....	40

Have a safe, enjoyable and photogenic summer!

Another Season Comes to a Close

(Continued from page 1)

Here are the End-of-Year winners for 2024-2025.



PRINT/GENERAL: PHIL OLIVO

"Not a Good Place to Tie Your Shoe"



PRINT/MONOCROME:

NEIL SHAPIRO

"Welcome to the Highlands"

2025-2026 Season Comes to a Close

(Continued from page 2)



DIGITAL/ASSIGNED:
ALAN WIGGINS

"Frece Tricolor"

(Planes, Trains and Automobiles)



Neil R Shapiro
Photo by Neil Shapiro.com

DIGITAL/GENERAL:

NEIL SHAPIRO

"Autumn Tapestry"



DIGITAL/MONOCROME:

JIM CRANER

"Abandoned"



JOIN US
at the SPS 2025-2026
AWARDS BUFFET LUNCHEON
Saturday, June 13, 2026
12 - 3

Menu:

Mixed Green and Caesar Salad
Chicken Milanese
Eggplant Parmesan
Tortellini Alfredo
Roasted Potatoes
Chef's Choice Vegetable
Soft Drinks
Coffee & Tea
Ice Cream Parfait
(Cash Bar)

Cost: \$40/person

Registration Link
will be provided via email.
R.S.V.P. by June 5, 2026



Beyond the Lens: Using Gemini AI as Your Personal Photography Coach

When most people think of using AI for photography, they usually think of two things: generating images from scratch or using AI-powered tools within their editor (like “Generative Remove” in Lightroom). But I’ve discovered a different, perhaps more powerful way to use it to improve your work: **AI-based critique**.

As photographers, we all know the value of a fresh set of eyes. Whether it’s at our regular Schenectady Photographic Society (SPS) meetings or during a formal competition, a good critique is often the fastest way to grow. But what if you could get a professional-level critique any day or time while sitting at your desk?

I am talking about using an AI chatbot—specifically Gemini, Google’s AI collaborator—as a virtual consultant to help you analyze, title, and improve the photographs you have already taken. Think of it as a 24/7 mentor sitting next to you while you work in Lightroom Classic (LRC) or Photoshop.

How to Get Started (On Your Computer)

You don’t need to install any new software; Gemini runs right in your web browser.

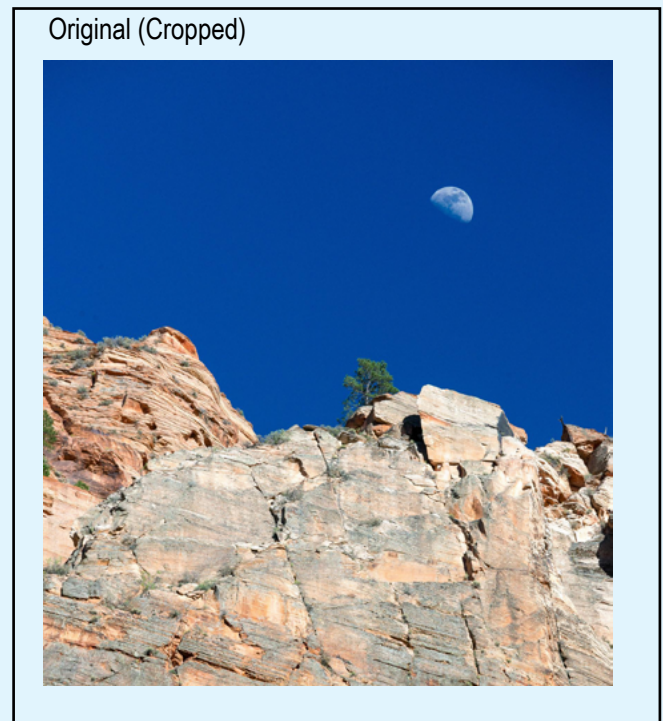
- **Access:** Open your browser and go to **gemini.google.com**.
- **Upload:** In the chat bar at the bottom, look for the **image icon**. Click it to select a photo from your computer.
- **The Interaction:** Gemini works best when you give it a “persona.” Instead of asking, “Is this good?” Give it a specific job to do.

The Proof is in the Processing: A Case Study

Below is an unedited (but cropped) RAW-to-JPEG conversion of a shot I took in Zion National Park, alongside the final version that went on to win First Place in an SPS competition. This was in the 2021-2022 season, well before I started using AI, but It’s remarkable how you’ll see below the AI’s critique matched the editing steps I took to get to this winning entry.

An Illustrative Tutorial

Below is a cropped but unedited RAW-to-JPEG conversion of a shot I took in Zion National Park, alongside the final version that went on to win First Place in an SPS competition. It’s remarkable how the AI’s critique matched the professional editing steps I eventually took.



FOCUS ON: Neil Shapiro: AI Photography Critique

(Continued from page 5)

My Edit



Learning from the Masters: The “Masters” Prompt

The most powerful way to use Gemini is to ask it to role play. Using the “Before” image above, I started with a simple prompt to get the artistic vision:

“Provide a detailed, honest critique of this photo and how to edit it from the perspective of Ansel Adams”

The Ansel Adams Perspective (The Master)

“We must evaluate this through the lens of the Zone System. The structural integrity of the cliff is excellent, but your ‘pre-visualization’ of the print needs work. Currently, the rock face is sitting at a Zone VI, but your shadows in the crevices are falling into a ‘muddy’ Zone II where detail is lost. This must be a black-and-white study. In the darkroom (or your digital equivalent), you must expand the contrast so the moon sits at a brilliant Zone IX, while the deepest shadows of the canyon remain a rich, textured Zone III. A photograph is not ‘taken,’ it is ‘made’ through this deliberate control of the light’s scale.”

The Technician’s Iteration: Getting Tips for Editing

While Ansel gives us the lofty goals of the Zone System, he doesn’t give us the Lightroom sliders. To get the roadmap needed to replicate that look, we iterate. I used this specific, minimal prompt:

The Technician Prompt:

“Analyze this photo as a high-end technical photography editor like Scott Kelby using LRC. Ansel Adams says I need to move my shadows from Zone II to Zone III and make the moon a Zone IX. Do not be polite; give me specific instructions using masking to achieve this.”

The Scott Kelby Perspective (The Technician)

*“If you want to hit Ansel’s specs, we’ve got to get surgical. In **Lightroom Classic**, hit ‘V’ to go B&W. Now, go to the Masking panel and **Select Sky**. Click ‘**Subtract**’ and choose ‘**Objects**’ to paint over the moon. Now you can **drop the Exposure** and **crank the Dehaze** to get that dark, heavy sky without losing the moon.*

*To fix those shadows Ansel is complaining about, create a new mask for the cliff (**Select Subject**). Use the **Shadows** slider to ‘open them up’ until you see detail in the cracks. **Pro Move:** Go to the **B&W Mixer** and **push the Green slider way up**. Even in B&W, the sensor remembers the foliage; boosting it will ‘light up’ that lone tree on the ridge against the dark sky. Finally, use a **Radial Gradient** on the moon itself and **bump the Whites** to get it to that ‘Zone IX’ brilliance!”*

The Power of Iteration

One of the best ways to use this is to iterate. Once you make the changes the AI suggests, export a new version and resubmit it! Ask: “I’ve made the changes you suggested; how does the balance look now?” State your intent (e.g., “I want a moody, dramatic feel”). Don’t be afraid to tell it if it’s not helping you move it in the right direction (e.g., I wanted something more painterly). Pick your genre, or pick your master, you can use as many as you want. It’s not going to be offended, or get tired.

FOCUS ON: Neil Shapiro: AI Photography Critique

(Continued from page 6)

Tips:

- *Make sure it REALLY is looking at your photo. Sometimes, it tells you things that sound wrong. It may be hallucinating (happens!) Tell it that it's hallucinating, that's not in my photo, please look at it again.*
- By its default programming, AI wants to be your friend. To get the kind of critique that actually wins competitions, use the **"Judge's Chamber" prompt**:

"I am entering this photo into a high-level photography competition. Do not be polite. I want a brutal, honest, and purely technical critique. Identify every flaw that a strict judge would notice—from sensor spots and chromatic aberration to composition 'dead zones.' Give me a numbered list of reasons why this photo might NOT win a ribbon."

- Remember: **Gemini is a technical consultant, not the Artistic Police**. If it points out "distortion" but you used a fisheye lens specifically for that creative effect—keep it! Use Gemini to identify technical opportunities you might have missed, but always keep the artistic heart of the photo yours.



Written in conjunction with Gemini! With direction, prompting, and many iterations!

Neil Shapiro, Judge Coordinator, SPS

Check out Neil's fine-art photography at: [fineartbynature.com](https://www.fineartbynature.com)

or on his Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/fineartbynature>

ABOUT NEIL SHAPIRO

My photographs are inspired by my love for impressionistic art. I use long exposures to stretch a moment of time into a sense of soft motion, color and form. Clouds play a special role in all of my landscapes. Lit by the golden light of a sunset or sunrise, each landscape is a work of art made by nature, displayed only for a brief moment, and never exactly the same. I return to the same location many times, and often spend hours waiting for just the right light and conditions. I am awed by nature and its palette, and my passion is to share this beauty with you.

I hope you enjoy my work--I appreciate all comments! Send your friends a link! I also have a facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/fineartbynature>). Please visit and click like to keep up with what's new!

More Than Just Critiques

Gemini is also a powerful tool for the "administrative" side of your workflow:

- **The "Curator" Mode:** Stuck between three similar shots for the monthly SPS competition? Upload all three and ask: "I am entering one of these in an 'Architectural' category. Rank them based on composition and impact, and point out any distractions a judge might penalize."
- **Titles & Captions:** Stuck on a name? Ask: "Give me 5 creative titles for this Zion landscape."
- **Identifying Locations:** If you have an old travel photo and can't remember the exact spot, Gemini can often identify the landmark or geography for you.

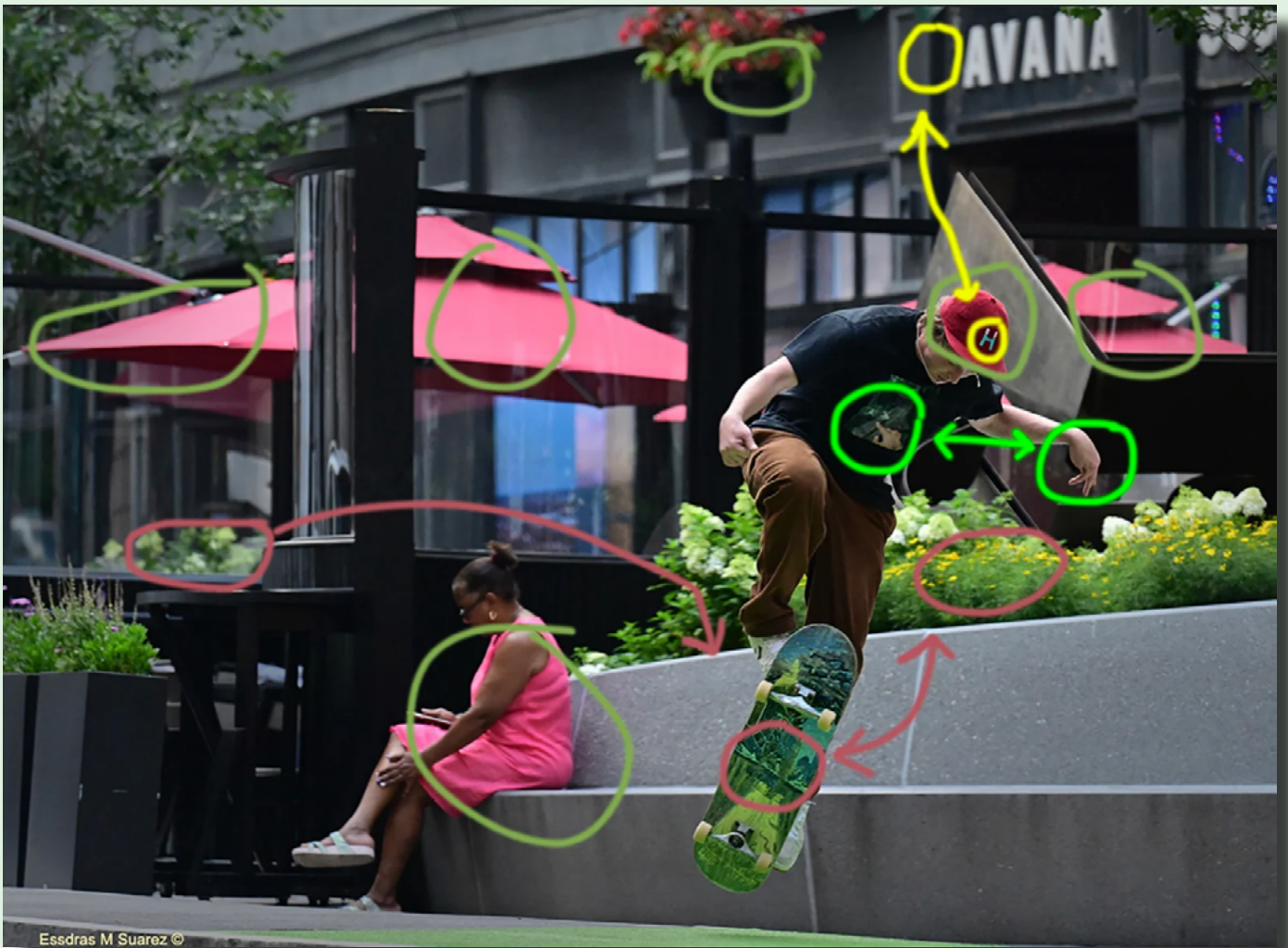
Experiment. Have Fun.

Next time you're stuck on an edit, don't just stare at the screen. Upload it to Gemini (or your favorite chatbot) and see what the "virtual masters" have to say! Have fun and experiment!

LEARN TO SEE...AND SERENDIPITY WILL FOLLOW

by Essdras M Suarez

(Reprinted with permission. Access the original post [here](#))



Most people would look at this photo and simply think, “Nice timing.”
They’d be wrong.

The longer I studied this frame, the more it revealed—
layers of timing, color, coincidence,
and one detail so precise it stopped me cold.

This isn’t luck.
This is what happens when the trained eye meets luck.

Take a closer look at the full breakdown on the following pages:

Learn to See...and Serendipity Will Follow

(Continued from page 8)



Every time I give a presentation, I revisit and update my slideshow. I don't want to bore myself, and I certainly don't want anyone who's seen me before to feel like I'm recycling content. Recently, while putting the final touches on a Street Photography / Decisive Moments virtual talk for a camera club, I came across this photo. The longer I looked at it, the more fascinating details revealed themselves—and I realized this was one of the greatest gifts my old friend serendipity has ever given me.

This reminded me of something Bruce Lee once said: "Empty your mind. Be formless, shapeless—like water. You put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle... Be water, my friend."

Through my experience and long career, I've come to see many similarities between martial arts and photography. In martial arts, you repeat a technique until it becomes second nature—until it becomes reflex. The same applies to photography. You need to become so familiar with your

gear that you no longer think about it; it simply becomes an extension of you.

Another example that applies equally to martial arts and photography:

First time you encounter flowing water, you get wet.

Then you learn to move with it.

Eventually, you become the water.

Photography works the same way.

At first, you don't know what to do with your subject. Then you try to control it, to impose your will.

But the real shift happens when you stop forcing it...

and begin to move with it.

That's when you're no longer photographing the moment—you're part of it.

Learn to See...and Serendipity Will Follow

(Continued from page 9)

And that's when the image, and all of its nuances, reveal themselves.

Before we go any further, a quick caveat. This photo I'm about to break down is not one of my best, nor is it a great image at first glance. However, because of the frozen moment of the skateboarder mid-trick, it immediately catches your attention.

But when you begin to study it with a critical eye—when you start peeling back the layers of timing, coincidence, and synchronicity unfolding across the frame—you begin to realize just how remarkable the capture truly is.

This kind of analysis isn't theoretical—it's how images are evaluated at the highest levels. I've sat in rooms with editors and photographers where conversations like this unfold, and the focus is rarely on what's obvious, but on what reveals itself over time.

I figured it was worth breaking it down with you.

First question: does the photo clearly communicate what it's about? Absolutely. At first glance, anyone can tell it's about a kid on a skateboard mid-trick.

Now, let's look at what makes it work:

- **Frozen action:** The skateboarder is suspended in midair, caught at the peak of the trick. That's the immediate, in-your-face hook.

- **Directional flow:** Everything in the frame moves from left to right—the skateboarder's motion, his body lean, the angle of the board. Even the visual rhythm of the scene supports that direction, allowing the viewer's eye to travel effortlessly through the image.

- **Repetition of color:** The woman wears a fuchsia dress. The awnings echo a similar tone. The skateboarder's hat is red. Even the flowers at the top of the frame carry that same color through. The palette is unified, and the eye follows.

- **Color harmony:** The green of the surrounding plants is mirrored in the underside of the skateboard—same tone, same visual rhythm. The small yellow flowers act as accents, and that same yellow is echoed in the skateboard's design and matched by the color of its wheels.

- **Visual echo:** The position of the skateboarder's left hand—fingers extended—is mirrored in the graphic on his T-shirt. Subtle, but powerful.

- **Layered composition:** The image naturally separates into layers—the skateboarder in the foreground, the seated woman in the midground, and the café scene in the background. This gives the photograph depth and structure, allowing multiple moments to coexist within the same frame.

- **Contrast of energy:** The skateboarder is airborne, dynamic, explosive. The woman is seated, still, absorbed in her own world. Motion and stillness, youth and calm—coexisting in a single moment.

- **Geometric echo:** The triangular structure behind the skateboarder subtly mirrors the angles of his body and board, reinforcing the visual rhythm of the frame.

- **The coup de grâce:** The detail that stopped me cold. The sign in the background appears to read "AVANA." The missing letter? The "H." And where is it? On the skateboarder's hat. Together: Havana.

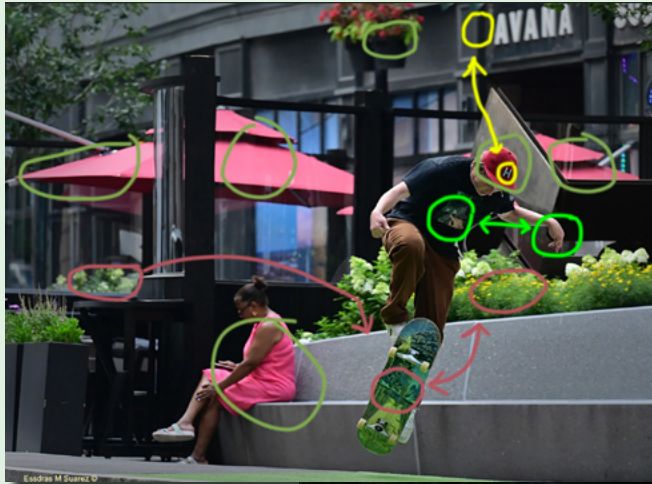
This is not a photograph that shouts—it's one that reveals itself, layer by layer, to those willing to look a little longer.

I didn't fully grasp the magnitude of this frame when I made it. But now that I see it, I'm grateful, humbled, and honestly a bit in awe. Moments like this remind me that when you're present—truly present—and ready, the world has a way of aligning in front of your lens.

Thank you, universe.

Learn to See...and Serendipity Will Follow

(Continued from page 10)



Learn more about Essdras Suarez and EMS Photo Adventures on his website:
<https://emsphotoadventures.com/>
and on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/EMSPhotoadventures>



EMSPHOTO
ADVENTURES
truly SEE the world

At EMS Photo Adventures, our mission is simple: to help you see the world with fresh eyes—and to create photographs that reflect the talent and curiosity already within you. Whether you're just starting out or refining your craft, we're here to help you grow, gain confidence, and earn the recognition your work deserves.

Guided by world-class mentors, including two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Essdras M Suarez and a team of passionate colleagues, you won't just learn camera skills. You'll learn how to observe more deeply, anticipate moments, and transform what you see into meaningful images. Our goal is to give you the tools, insight, and encouragement to discover what your vision can really do.



APRIL PRINT NIGHT

April 8, 2026



Judge Chair, Neil Shapiro



Photos © Linda Tommasulo



Hannah Zel, judging the last print competition of the season.



Whether you do your own,
or use an outside service,
printing is an art-form itself...
cropping, editing, choosing the medium.
**Nothing compares with
holding a print in your hand.**

Join us next season and try your hand at printing
your photos! You'll be glad you did!

LUBA RICKET CREATIVE COMPETITION NIGHT

April 15, 2026



Tax Day didn't deter all the members who came out for the Luba Ricket Creative Competition!



Photos © Linda Tommasulo



Luba Ricket Creative Competition

(Continued from page 13)



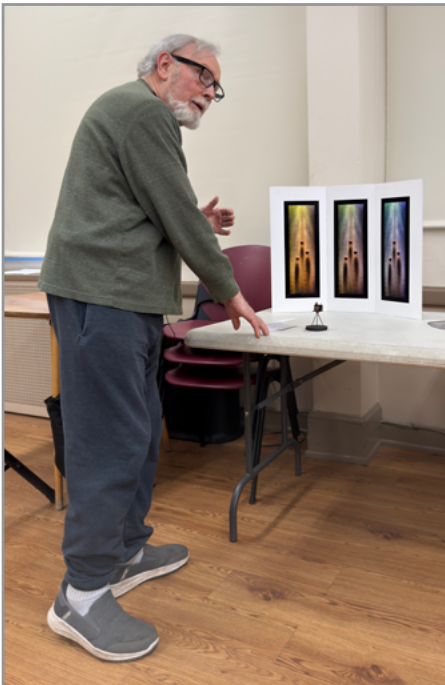
Joan Heffler, Luba Ricket Creative Competition Coordinator, introducing judge, Lawrence White



Judging the non-digital entries



Photos © Linda Tommasulo



See the winners on Pages 19-22.

JOIN US FOR FIELD TRIPS WITH JANICE PRICHETT

The Photography Connection has moved to Facebook!

www.facebook.com/groups/906936454705566

Note: Although SPS is on respite, field trips will continue through the summer and beyond.

The Schenectady Photographic Society participates in field trips organized by Photography Connection. They have moved from Meetup to a Facebook Group. Going forward all outings will be posted exclusively on the Photography Connection Facebook page. Events will be posted as private Facebook events—just click “Going” if you plan to attend. That’s it! For events that require reservations, please only mark yourself as attending if you truly plan to come.

Each month, they’ll post a theme to inspire shooting and sharing. Have a theme idea? Let Janice know!

Members are encouraged to post images from outings in albums on their Facebook page.

They will be inviting instructors to teach in-person workshops at the Clifton Park Library on topics of interest to the group. In addition, they plan to hold two social events a year—dinners, photo-sharing nights, etc., and larger in-person sharing sessions where members can present work or talk about recent trips.

Members can post photography-related announcements (workshops, locations, last-minute outings), and you’re welcome to suggest or lead outings. Janice will be happy to help with organizing and posting.

All SPS members are encouraged to go to the Photography Connection Facebook page, ask to join and wait for approval.. There is no cost.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/906936454705566>



Full moon at Olana © 2025 Janice Prichett

UPDATE:

Kim Koza has volunteered to lead the Smart Phone Focus Group. Members who signed up will be receiving updates shortly.



designed by  freepik.com

THE SPS SMART PHONE FOCUS GROUP

At the suggestion of member, Saul Seinberg, we are in the process of creating a Smart Phone Focus Group at SPS. The intent will be to share and encourage members to shoot with their phones, improve their skill and participate in competitions with smart phone images.

It is in the preliminary stages, and many members have expressed interest.

Stay tuned for more details in this newsletter and through our group email.

OUR "FUN" COMPETITION

ASSIGNED TOPICS COMPETITIONS

We will continue to have Assigned Topics for Print and Digital for our upcoming seasons.
Digital images may be submitted on our website:

<https://spsphoto.org/competitions/digital-image/upload-projected/>.

Here are the Assigned Topics for the 2026-2027 season:

(Images must have been taken after June 1, 2025)

<u>Month</u>	<u>Print Night Assigned</u>	<u>Digital Night Assigned</u>
October	Composite	Fruit and/or Vegetable
November	Symmetry	Barns
December	Everyday Objects	Standing Out
January	Nature	Car Details
February	Multiple Exposure	Intentional Camera Movement
March	Winter	Sunrise, Sunset and/or Sunburst
April	Silhouettes	Bridges

Here are the Assigned Topics for the 2027-2028 season:

(Images must have been taken after May 1, 2026)

<u>Month</u>	<u>Print Night Assigned</u>	<u>Digital Night Assigned</u>
October	Photo Taken at Night	It's About the Details
November	Diptych or Triptych	Unusual Perspective
December	Street Scene	Americana
January	The Color Green	It's Not What You Think It Is!
February	Flower(s)	Low Key
March	Triangle(s)	Backlit
April	Grain or Texture	Wildlife That Flies

Start shooting **now** for the next two seasons!
This is probably our most challenging competition,
since gets you out of your comfort zone.
That's the beauty of it.
Give it a try!

JOIN ~~LIKE~~ US ON FACEBOOK!



Group by Schenectady Photographic Society

Schenectady Photographic Society FB Group

**WE CHANGED
OUR NAME!**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/152200768242>

Our “regular” SPS Facebook group (now renamed to “Schenectady Photographic Society FB Group”) is open to all interested photographers. Participants must request permission to join. It’s a great forum for all things relating to photography.



Schenectady Photographic Society

344 followers · 2 following

[Visit Group](#)

[Following](#)

[Message](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/schenectadyphotographicsociety>

Our “community” SPS Facebook page is where we post notifications, events, etc.

With new members joining every month, this page will repeat in each issue of the *Focus*.

OUR SPS-MEMBERS-ONLY FACEBOOK GROUP “THE SPS LEARNING CENTER”




The SPS Learning Center

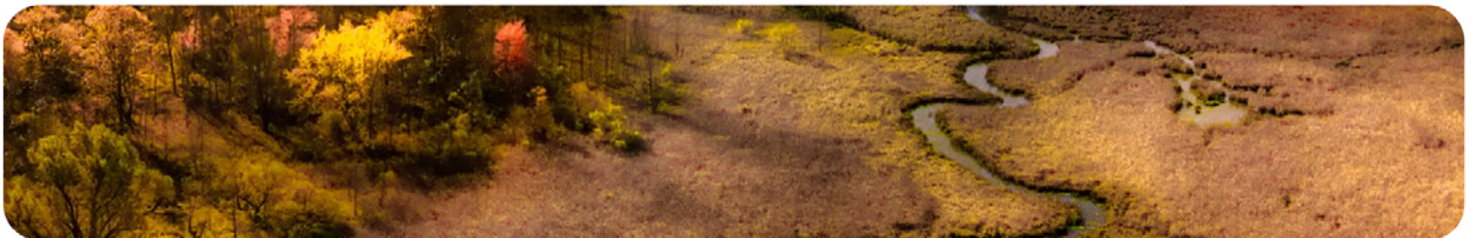
Private group · 31 members

A great benefit of membership: a forum to share photography-related information, post images for critique and more.

If you haven't joined yet, now is the time!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1073846327661737>

FOLLOW US ON  YouTube



Schenectady Photographic Society

@SchenectadyPhotoSociety · 41 subscribers · 81 videos

Photoessays and other short videos from the Schenectady Photographic Society. Feel f...more

spsphoto.org

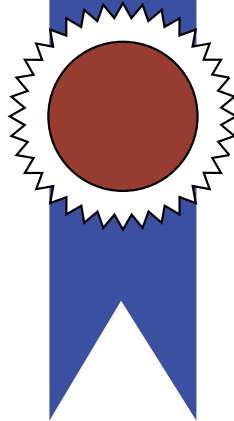
We hope to have our YouTube channel up-to-date soon,
Only SPS Members will be able to access Event Night presentations.

<https://www.youtube.com/@SchenectadyPhotoSociety/videos>

LUBA RICKET CREATIVE COMPETITION 2026
Judged by Lawrence White



First Place - \$100 Winner:
"Warp Fields"
© Joe Cotroneo



2nd Place - \$75 Winner:
"My Adirondack Dreams"
© Neil Shapiro

LUBA RICKET CREATIVE COMPETITION 2026
Judged by Lawrence White



3rd Place - \$50 Winner:
"The Times They
Are a Changin'"
© Linda Tommasulo



4th Place - \$25 Winner:
"Slide Hustle"
© Kim Koza



5th Place - \$15 Winner:
"Dreamscape"
© Jan Juliano

LUBA RICKET CREATIVE COMPETITION 2026

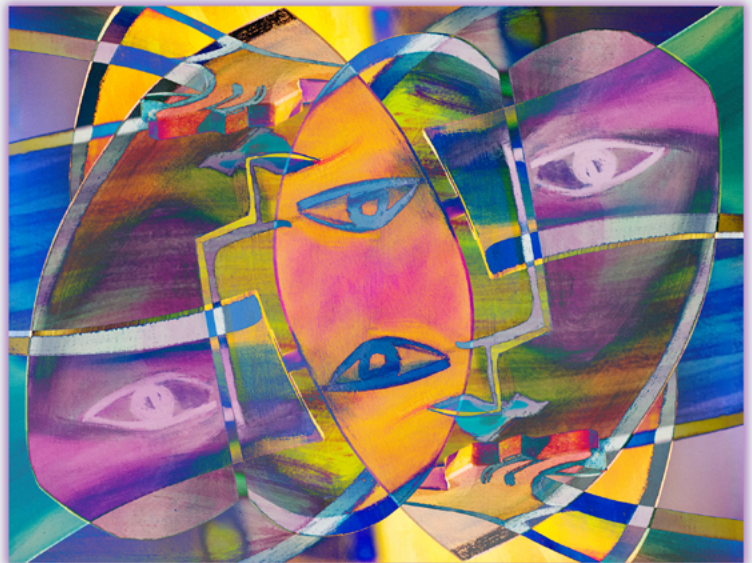
DIGITAL



First Place - \$100 Winner:
"Great Sacandaga Lake Fun"
© Kim Koza



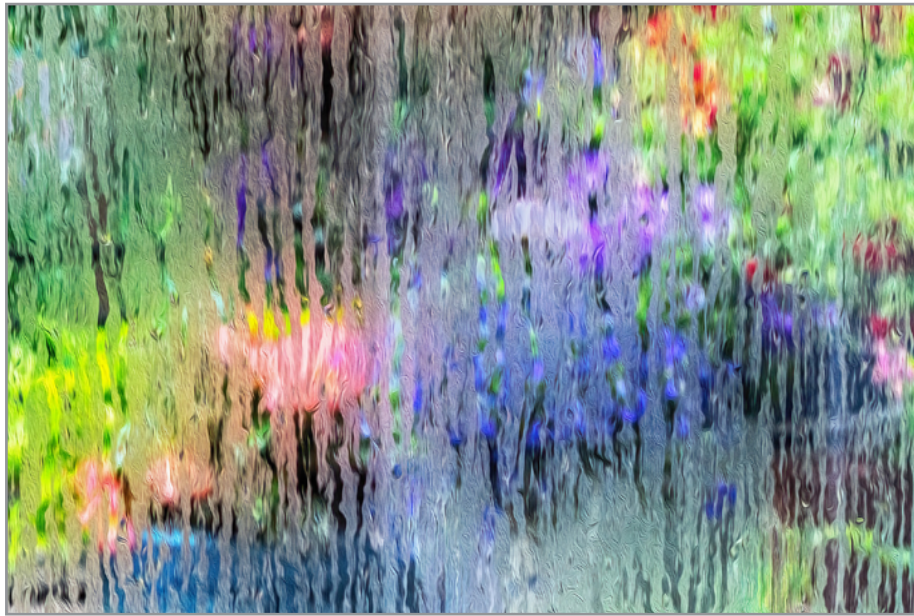
2nd Place - \$75 Winner:
"Slow Burn"
© Janice Prichett



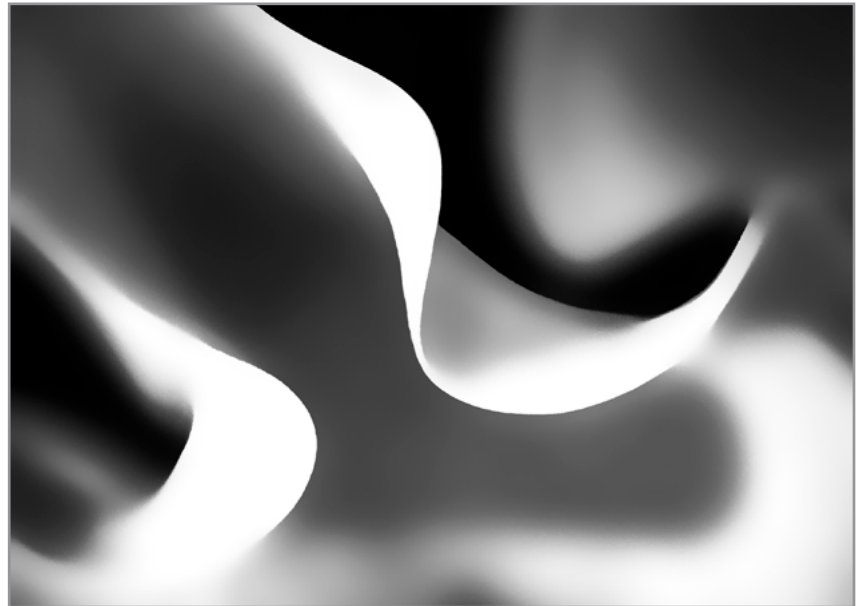
3rd Place - \$50 Winner:
"Here's Looking at You"
© Linda Tommasulo

LUBA RICKET CREATIVE COMPETITION 2026

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4th Place - \$25 Winner:
"Through the Veil"
© Janice Prichett



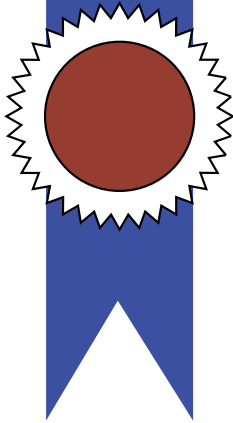
5th Place - \$15 Winner:
"Folds and Edges"
© Marty Bannan

Special thanks go to...

The family of Luba Ricket for their continuing donation to make this competition possible;
Joan Heffler, for organizing and hosting this special event;
Lawrence White, for his energetic and insightful judging; and, most importantly,
The memory and spirit of Luba Ricket for continuing to challenge and inspire us.

APRIL WINNING PRINTS

Topic: Animal



First Place:
"Malachite"
© Joe Cotroneo



2nd Place:
"Porch Kitty"
© Linda Tommasulo

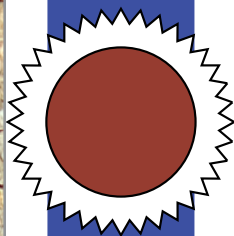
APRIL WINNING PRINTS

Topic: Animal



3rd Place:
"Robin"

© Bert van Grondelle



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Honorable Mention:
"Pleco Face"

© Colleen Magai

APRIL WINNING PRINTS

Topic: Animal

Honorable Mention:
"That Was Good,
Now to Clean"
© Connie Frisbee Houde



Honorable Mention:
"Grackle"
© Joe Cotroneo

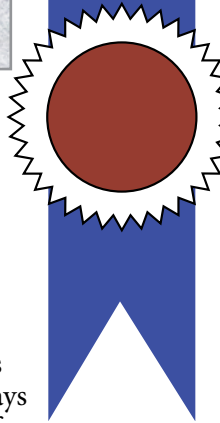
Judge: Dino Petrocelli

With a love for music and rock concerts, Dino Petrocelli's passion for photography began at the age of sixteen. Always with a camera in hand, he was asked to shoot a wedding for a friend in 1985, which began his career. After ten years, the business expanded with studio photography where Dino learned everything on his own by reading books, trying his own lighting techniques, and a lot of trial and error. Soon he found himself working for independent companies and small ad agencies photographing everything from gloves to car parts, operating rooms, and CD covers. In 1997, Dino was approached to shoot motorcycle parts for a distributor and the covers for their catalog. Since then, not only does he continue to shoot weddings but he has been very involved in shooting for top national motorcycle magazines.

Dino's clients over the years include: Atlantic British Ltd., GMP Advertising, Swany Gloves, Grando Gloves, Ambrosino Design, WTEN TV, Bikers Choice, Kaiser Illustration, FLY 92, WPYX 106, *Hot Bike* magazine, *Easyriders* magazine, *American Iron* magazine, numerous brochures, catalogs, billboards and CD covers. He has worked with the Discovery Channel and most recently new clients such as, Paul Jr. Designs, Allstate Insurance, Factory Five Racing, *GM High Tech* magazine and *Corvette Fever Magazine*.

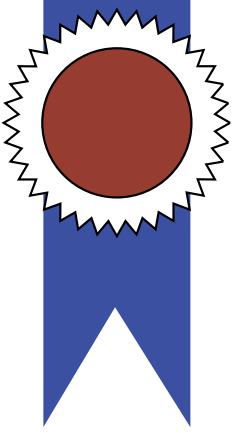
<https://www.dinopetrocelliphoto.com/>

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APRIL
WINNING PRINTS

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First Place:
"Laundry Day"
© Connie Frisbee Houde



Linda A. Tommasulo
PHOTOGRAPHY

2nd Place:
"Running on Pause"
© Linda Tommasulo *Continued...*

APRIL WINNING PRINTS

GENERAL



3rd Place:
"Wooden Rose"
© Jan Juliano



Honorable Mention
"Dreams of Flight"
© Neil Shapiro

APRIL WINNING PRINTS

GENERAL



Honorable Mention:
"Navajo Perspective"
© Neil Shapiro



Honorable Mention:
"Missing in Action"
© Richard Long

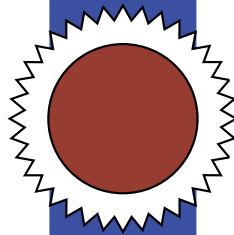
APRIL WINNING PRINTS



First Place:
"In and Out"
© Connie Frisbee Houde



2nd Place:
"The Vessel"
© Neil Shapiro



MONOCHROME

APRIL WINNING PRINTS



3rd Place:
"Alpenglow Sentinel"
© Neil Shapiro



Honorable Mention:
"GW"
© Linda Tommasulo

APRIL WINNING DIGITAL

Topic: Shadows



First Place:
"Five O'Clock Shadow"
© Bertrand Schreiberstein



2nd Place:
"Shadow Lattice"
© Elena Keesee

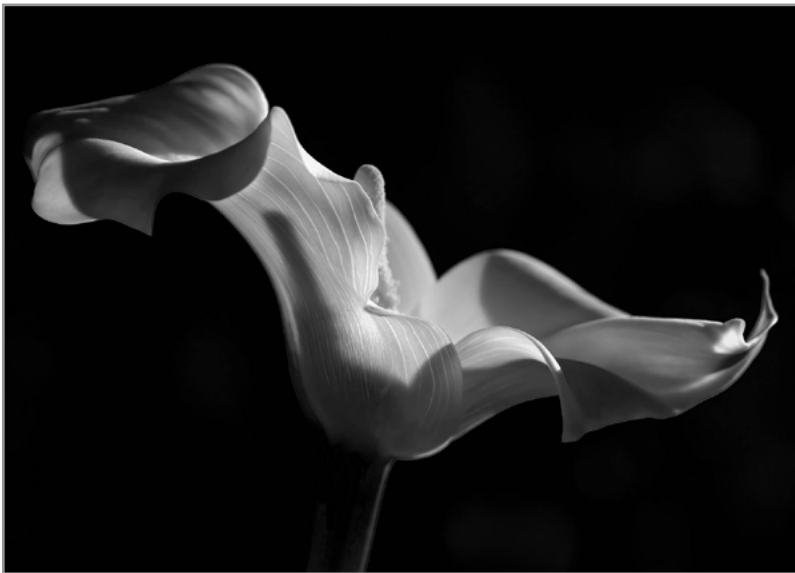


APRIL WINNING DIGITAL

Topic: Shadows

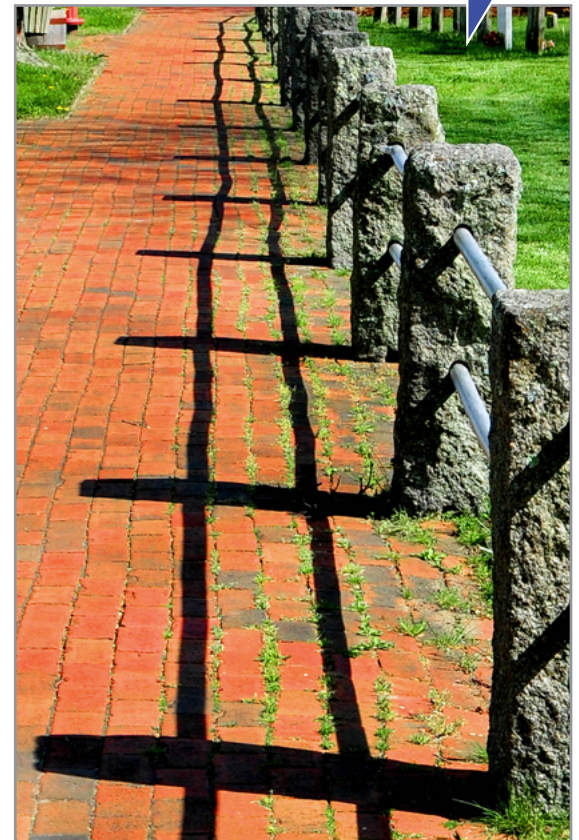
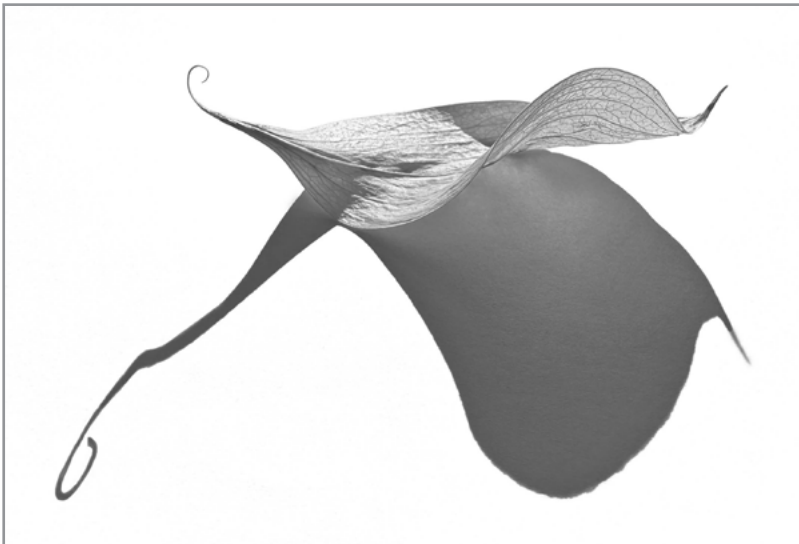


3rd Place:
"Moonlit Tree Branches"
© Colleen Magai



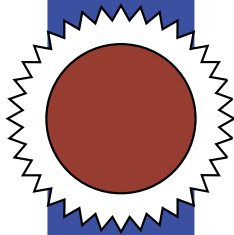
Honorable Mention:
"Morning Blossom"
© Janice Prichett

Honorable Mention:
"Leaf Shadow"
© Kim Koza



Honorable Mention:
"Crooked Fence"
© Joan Heffler

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APRIL WINNING DIGITAL

GENERAL



First Place:
"Stillness in Blue"
© Elena Keesee



2nd Place:
"Canadian Fires Sun Tree"
© Kim Koza

Judge: Nikki McDonald

My given name was Nikolyn but I have always been known to family and friends as Nikki. I grew up in New Mexico and my fondness for the Southwest can surely be traced back to my growing-up years. We lived for a time in Belgium, as a result of my husband's military service, where I developed a love for French culture. I was lucky enough to travel back to Europe a number of times and so scenes from France especially are another recurrent theme in my photos. My husband and I have lived in Nebraska since 1987, long enough for me to develop an appreciation for and love of the Midwestern United States and rural scenes in particular.

I have been actively pursuing photography since 2006. My portfolio includes everything from extreme close-ups to landscapes, from animal and human portraits to shots of ordinary objects, from formal still lifes to spontaneous street captures, from realism to fantasy to abstraction. I love both color and black and white. If your tastes run to the eclectic, you will enjoy browsing my portfolio.

<https://nikolynmcdonaldphotography.pixels.com/>

APRIL WINNING DIGITAL

GENERAL



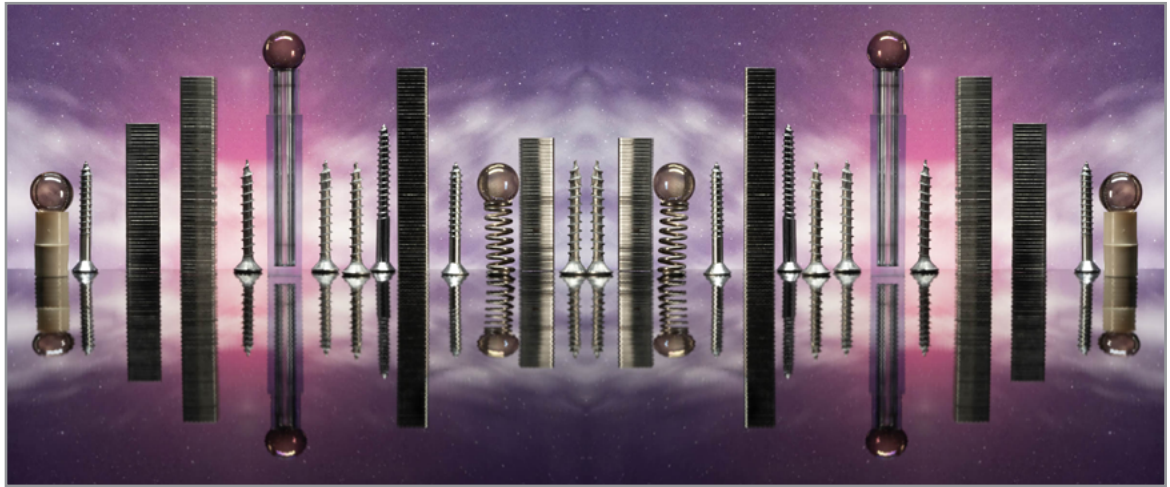
3rd Place:
"Splendid Day for a Picnic"
© Bill Lanahan



4th Place:
"A Leaf Stands Alone"
© Sean Sullivan

APRIL WINNING DIGITAL

GENERAL



Honorable Mention:
"Screw City"
© Joe Cotroneo



Honorable Mention:
"Evening Pizza"
© Phil Olivo



Honorable Mention:
"Seaside Chat"
© Bill Lanahan

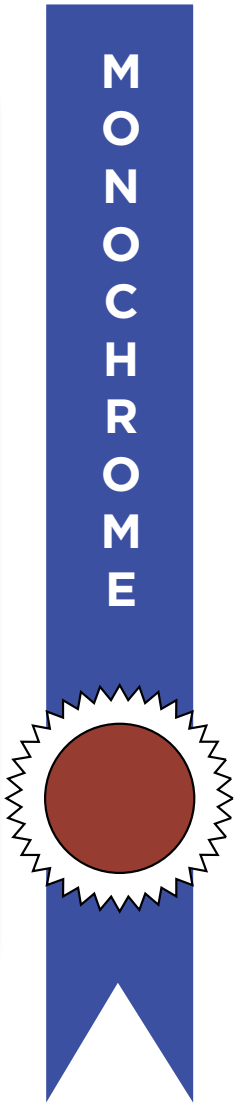


Honorable Mention:
"The Pavilion"
© Jina Mao

APRIL WINNING DIGITAL



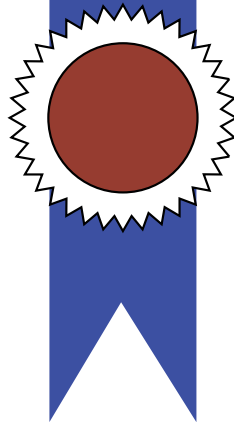
First Place:
"Steps of Chittenango"
© Zac Baldwin



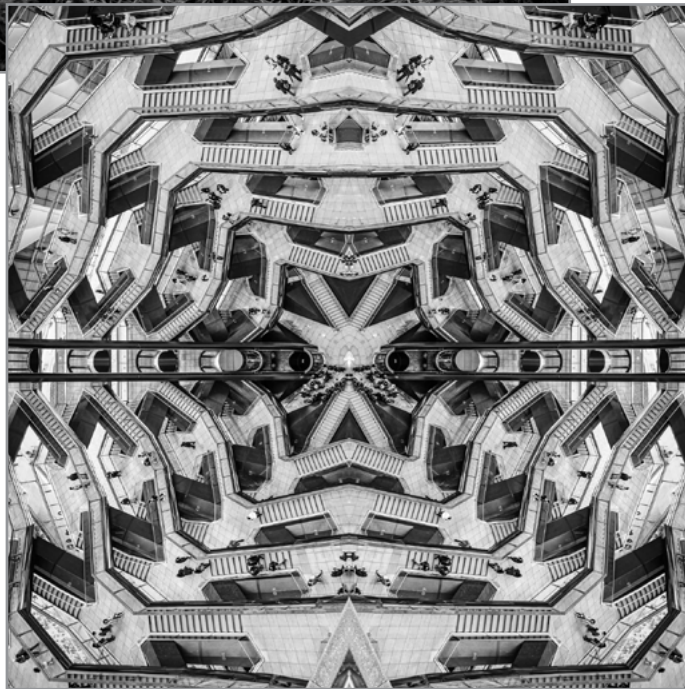
2nd Place:
"Relaxing"
© Alan Wiggins

APRIL
WINNING
DIGITAL

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3rd Place:
"Brush Wolf"
© Zac Baldwin



Honorable Mention:
"Ascending and Descending,
A Tribute"
© Neil Shapiro

Honorable Mention:
"Arches at the Met"
© Jina Mao



Honorable Mention:
"Good Advice"
© Bill Lanahan



ABOUT THE SCHENECTADY PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY



For 90+ years, the Schenectady Photographic Society has been the meeting place of photographers of all levels—from beginners to serious amateurs to professionals—with the goal of exploring and sharing their love of photography. Members throughout the Capital Region (and beyond, thanks to Zoom!) meet on Wednesday nights to engage in various competitions (digital, photo essay and more), share their vision with like-minded photographers, enjoy guest speaker presentations and other member benefits to further their knowledge, creativity and inspiration.

As part of our monthly competitions, we are challenged with an assigned topic—encouraging participants to venture out of their comfort zones. Members participating in competitions receive specific commentary and suggestions to take their images to the next level. Don't wish to compete? That's OK too. Observing competitions is always inspirational and a great learning opportunity.

With COVID behind us, we are meeting again in person (see calendar on the last page of this newsletter). And you can join us on Field Trips organized by the Photography Connection Meetup. Stay up-to-date with SPS on our website: www/spsphoto.org.

The Schenectady Photographic Society is an enthusiastic and energetic group. Our camaraderie is infectious.

*It's not about being better than everyone else...
it's about being better than you were.*

SPS BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2025-2026

President Alan Wiggins
president@spsphoto.org

Vice President Linda Tommasulo
vp@spsphoto.org

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treasurer@spsphoto.org

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digitalchair@spsphoto.org

Photo Essay OPEN

Judge Coordinator Neil Shapiro
judging@spsphoto.org

Communications..... Linda Tommasulo
& Sean Sullivan
communications@spsphoto.org

Field Trips..... Photography Connection
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/906936454705566>

LUBA RICKET CREATIVITY COORDINATOR
Joan Heffler

TRAVELING EXHIBIT COORDINATORS
Bert van Grondelle, Jerry Boehm,
Rich Schreiberstein, M-J Adelman
travelingexhibit@spsphoto.org

REFRESHMENT COORDINATORS
Judy Breslau & John Ogden



Connect with the Schenectady Photographic Society:



Website: <https://spsphoto.org/>

Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/152200768242>

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/schenectadyphotographicsociety>

Members Only Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1073846327661737>

YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@SchenectadyPhotoSociety/videos>

With new members joining every month, this page will repeat in each issue of the *Focus*.

THE FOCUS NEEDS YOU! For articles, suggestions, and member profiles (Focus on: YOU!). Contact Linda at newsletter@spsphoto.org.

SPS 2025-2026 SEASON COMPETITION JUDGES

This is the schedule of judges for the season.
Note that, depending upon availability, this may change prior to the competition dates.

October, 2025

10/15/25.....**PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC**

Assigned Topic: Doors and/or Windows

JUDGE: EVAN LAUBER

<https://www.sphotosbyevan.com>

10/22/25.....**DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom**

Assigned Topic: Reflections

JUDGE: LISA CUCHARA

<http://www.lisaandtomphotography.com/>

November, 2025

11/5/25.....**PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC**

Assigned Topic: Still Life

JUDGE: FRANK RAPANT

<https://www.frankrapant.photography/>

11/12/25.....**DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom**

Assigned Topic: Circles

JUDGE: TOM CUCHARA

<http://www.lisaandtomphotography.com/>

December, 2025

12/3/25.....**PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC**

Assigned Topic: Water

JUDGE: FRED NEUDOERFFER

<https://neustudios.com/>

12/10/25.....**DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom**

Assigned Topic: Fall Colors

JUDGE: BUTCH MAZZUCA

<https://butchmazzuca.com/>

January, 2026

1/7/26.....**PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC**

Assigned Topic: Architecture

JUDGE: RICHARD LOVRICH

<https://www.studiolovrich.com/>

1/14/26.....**DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom**

Assigned Topic: Patterns

JUDGE: CHRIS MURRAY

<https://www.chrismurrayphotography.com/>

February, 2026

2/4/26.....**PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC**

Assigned Topic: Abstract

STEPHANIE PALAZEKE

<http://www.stephaniepalazeke.com>

February, 2026 (Cont'd.)

2/11/26.....**DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom**

Assigned Topic: Primary Colors

JUDGE: JOHANNA SIEGMANN

<http://www.johannasiegmann.com/>

March, 2026

3/4/26.....**PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC**

Assigned Topic: Landscape

JUDGE: DAVID FINGERHUT

<https://davidbfingerhut.zenfolio.com/>

3/11/26.....**DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom**

Assigned Topic: City Scenes

JUDGE: LIESL WALSH

<https://www.lieslwalsh.com/>

3/18/26.....**PHOTO ESSAY COMPETITION @ FUMC**

JUDGE: CINDY SCHULTZ

<https://cindyschultz.photoshelter.com/index>

April, 2026

4/8/26.....**PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC**

Assigned Topic: Animal

JUDGE: HANNAH ZEL

<https://www.hannahzelphotos.com/>

4/15/26.....**DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom**

Assigned Topic: Shadows

JUDGE: NIKKI McDONALD

<https://fineartamerica.com/profiles/nikolynmcdonaldphotography/shop/framed+prints>

4/22/26.....**LUBA RICKET CREATIVE
COMPETITION @ FUMC**

JUDGE: LAWRENCE WHITE

<https://www.lawrencewhiteartwork.com/>

May, 2026

5/6/26.....**PRINT IMAGES OF THE YEAR @ FUMC**

RICHARD LOVRICH

<https://www.studiolovrich.com/>

5/13/26.....**DIGITAL IMAGES OF THE YEAR on Zoom**

JUDGES: NICK PALMIERI

<https://nicholas-palmieri.pixels.com/>

ELLEN STEIN

SPS 2025-2026 SEASON CALENDAR

For Assigned Topics, images must have been taken on or after May 1, 2025.

Deadline for submission of digital images is midnight on Saturday (Sunday am) before the competition date—no exceptions!

Meetings start at 7pm. For Zoom meetings, members will receive appropriate link to sign in via email.

This schedule is always a work in progress and is subject to change!

September , 2025

9/24/25..... OPENING DAY@ FUMC
Bring a favorite photo (print or digital)
to share and discuss

October, 2025

10/1/25..... NO MEETING (YOM KIPPUR)

10/8/25..... EVENT NIGHT on Zoom
Alan Shapiro: Creative Still Life

10/15/25PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC
Assigned Topic: Doors and/or Windows

10/22/25DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom
Assigned Topic: Reflections

10/29/25 EVENT NIGHT on Zoom
Joe Brady - Taking Your Images From Good to Great

November, 2025

11/5/25.....PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC
Assigned Topic: Still Life

11/12/25DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom
Assigned Topic: Circles

11/19/25 EVENT NIGHT on Zoom
Rad Drew - Getting the Most & Best from your iPhone
Camera

11/26/25NO MEETING (THANKSGIVING)

December, 2025

12/3/25.....PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC
Assigned Topic: Water

12/10/25DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom
Assigned Topic: Fall Colors

12/17/25 EVENT NIGHT on Zoom
Jeff Perkins - Street Portraiture

12/24/25NO MEETING (CHRISTMAS EVE)

12/31/25 NO MEETING (NEW YEAR'S EVE)

January, 2026

1/7/26.....PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC
Assigned Topic: Architecture

1/14/26.....DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom
Assigned Topic: Patterns

1/21/26..... EVENT NIGHT on Zoom
Ray Schneider: Intentional Composition

1/28/26..... EVENT NIGHT on Zoom
Connie Frisbee Houde: Travel Photography -
Phone vs. Full Gear, Italy and Central Asia

February, 2026

2/4/26..... PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC
Assigned Topic: Abstract

2/11/26..... DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom
Assigned Topic: Primary Colors

2/18/26..... EVENT NIGHT on Zoom
Chuck Kimmerle:
Nostalgic Black and White

2/25/26.....EVENT NIGHT on Zoom
Hazel Meredith: Getting Creative with
Smart Photo Editor

March, 2026

3/4/26..... PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC
Assigned Topic: Landscape

3/11/26..... DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom
Assigned Topic: City Scenes

3/18/26..... PHOTO ESSAYS @ FUMC
Constructive Critique by Cindy Schultz

3/25/26.....EVENT NIGHT on Zoom
Caroline Preece: Street Photography - How to
Feel the Fear, Do it Anyway and Get Great Images

April, 2026

4/1/26.....NO MEETING (PASSOVER)

4/8/26..... PRINT COMPETITION @ FUMC
Assigned Topic: Animal

4/15/26..... DIGITAL COMPETITION on Zoom
Assigned Topic: Shadows

4/22/26..... LUBA RICKET CREATIVE
COMPETITION @ FUMC
Judge: Lawrence White

4/29/26.....EVENT NIGHT on Zoom
Butch Mazzuca: Beyond the Rule of Thirds

May, 2026

5/6/26.....PRINT IMAGES OF THE YEAR @ FUMC

5/13/26.... DIGITAL IMAGES OF THE YEAR on Zoom

June 13, 2026.....SPS AWARDS LUNCHEON
@ Turf Tavern, Scotia

**HAVE A SAFE, ENJOYABLE
AND PHOTOGENIC SUMMER!**