

## Through My Electronic Viewfinder

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Most WPS members take their photographic competitions seriously, perhaps far too seriously. We have come to the end of our regular monthly competitions for this season. Perhaps it's appropriate to take a look back and consider the changes that have occurred over the past few competition seasons.

In our pre-digital film days, competitions were very predictable events at WPS as well as all other camera clubs. You spent your vacations traveling and shooting scenics, butterflies and flowers. Hours were spent sorting out images on a light box to find bold graphic images suitable for competition. Slides were cropped with silver tape or remounted in Erie Camera Club mounts for entry into the regular 35mm slide category. Color negatives were dropped off at the local lab for printing while we spent hours in the darkroom printing our B&W negatives. Images were highly manipulated in the camera and to some extent in the darkroom but in general the images you saw on your slides or negatives ended up as the images we saw in competition.

Yes, we did have the Open Mind category for members trying to salvage their overexposed slides as sandwiches and montages. A few avant-garde members actually shot intentionally blurred images, defocused Christmas tree lights, patterns and abstractions specifically for the OM competitions.

Then along came first Photoshop and then digital cameras and our competitions have never been the same. Manipulations are now mostly done in post processing of the camera images. The previous sharp distinction between regular and Open Mind photos has blurred and virtually disappeared. Every competition brings more OM images into the Regular categories and the images entered into the OM category have become an exercise in using Photoshop filters, plug-ins and Painterly techniques. Our competitions are becoming less about traditional photography and more about creative imaging. We can debate whether this is good or bad but we cannot dispute that it is happening.

In the future, can any serious competitor chance entering a natural looking image be it a scenic, a butterfly or a flower with any hope of successfully competing against a highly manipulated, artistically stylized, Photoshopped image? Does that bother us or should it?

Do you an opinion about the state and future of our competitions? Send your opinions, suggestions and complaints to me at [Dick@wpsphoto.org](mailto:Dick@wpsphoto.org).

***Dick Budnik***