

The Statement of Intent

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In recent Assessments for the Portfolio Distinction program, applicants have struggled with the Statement of Intent, the Overview Image or both as they relate to each other. This article's purpose is to help applicants understand what is expected of them with their entry. One of the program's objectives is educational, and the Portfolio Committee has determined that clear communication with the applicants is needed.

First, I will quote Dan Charbonnet from his webinar on the PSA Education page. Dan was one of the early architects of the program and was instrumental in providing a framework for the assessors to use. He says, "Design of the Overview Image combined with the Statement of Intent can make or break your portfolio. These two combined give the assessors a sense of how cohesive your portfolio is and how well it supports your theme."

To help each applicant learn what is expected of them, I have selected passages from the Assessor's Training Manual written and re-edited by Anne Sutcliffe in October of 2021.

- The Statement of Intent must be 75 words or less and, along with the Overview image, should give the Assessors a sense of the cohesiveness of your portfolio and how well it supports your theme. It should make it clear why you are making your portfolio, i.e., what is your intent, and should support your theme in a positive manner.
- *A Statement of Intent* must accompany the portfolio. Up to 75 words outlining the theme, purpose, objective, or intent of the work are permitted. The SOI should not include personal information or technical details. Applicants are very highly recommended to include a sentence starting with 'This Portfolio shows /demonstrates/ illustrates' followed by words that describe their intent succinctly with respect to the images. Assessors should not be left in any doubt about the photographer's intent.
- To be successful, the Statement of Intent (SOI) and Overview Image (OI) considered together must score three or more votes. Failure to do so may lead to the failure of the entire portfolio no matter what happens next.
- *An Overview Image* is also required and should show all the individual images organized in a cohesive manner on a sympathetic background and presented in support of the

theme described in the SOI. **Initially, you will assess whether the *Overview Image* supports or does not support the *Statement of Intent*.**

- They are assessed individually against the current standard, which is constantly evolving.

This last point is very important because what was acceptable three years ago may not be today as the program evolves.

The following are passages from the education course "Creating a PSA Portfolio" by Joanne Stolte. This program is not available as of this writing, but the information is current.

"A clear understanding of your intent is very important so the Assessors can determine if you were successful with both the Statement and if the images support the Statement. If the Assessors need to guess what your theme is or what your intent is, this could put your portfolio at a disadvantage. Words such as "It is the intent of this portfolio..." or "This portfolio will show..." will help the candidates and the assessors.

- Be very clear in what the purpose or intent of the portfolio is about.
- Be positive and definitive about your portfolio. For example, do not say that I hope to..., that I wish..., that I tried to.... Instead, be more direct and say I will show..., this is about..., this portfolio shows... and so on. These are examples, but you should understand that the maker's tone needs to be direct and positive.
- The Statement of Intent must reflect what is in the Overview image. For example, if you said that the girls all wore yellow skirts and one wore a blue skirt, either the Statement or the image would be wrong. The Statement could say that the girls all wore skirts, or the girls wore either blue or yellow skirts, or you could change the image with the blue skirt. This does not suggest that you need to describe everything in your images, but if you say something in the Statement of Intent, it needs to be consistent with what is in the images.
- Be precise and concise. Being too wordy, making a political statement or a personal statement is not desirable. Specifics in the Statement of Intent need to be accurate. If you say that the images were taken in Yellowstone National Park,

and they were taken in Glacier National Park, then it would be marked down. You could say the images were taken in National Parks and be OK."

The last thing that I would like to point out is that the standards and expectations become greater as you move up to Silver or Gold levels. Having a portfolio that follows a formula of others that have passed will not be considered strong artistically or creatively. It will be increasingly difficult for the assessors to look favorably on a portfolio that was created in 1 hour at a nature preserve or festival.