



Distinctive Image

featuring...

Elena McTighe, APSA, EPSA
Sea Girt, New Jersey



Barrel Race Rodeo

The *PSA Journal* continues its *Distinctive Image* series, this time featuring Photographic Society of America (PSA) artist **Elena McTighe, APSA, EPSA**, who resides in Florida and New Jersey. A member of the Society since 2002, Elena is well known for her bird images, but in this article she shares her love for horses.

Elena began entering PSA-recognized exhibitions in 2003 and since then has accumulated Stars or Galaxies in every division except 3D. Never a film user, she began photography with a digital camera, and when she joined the Society the only Division open to her was the Electronic Imaging Division (EID), in which she earned a Galaxy 2. As the other divisions evolved to include

electronic imaging she earned: 5 Stars in Nature, 3 Stars in Photo Travel, 2 Stars in Photojournalism, and 4 Stars in the Color Projected Image Division (CPID). She converted her EID and CPID Stars and now holds a Galaxy 3 in the new Projected Image Division. In addition to her electronic imaging, she holds 2 stars in both Small Print Monochrome and Small Print Color in the Pictorial Print Division (PPD).

Elena has been listed in *PSA's Who's Who in Photography* every year since 2003 to the present, many times in the top boxes in North America, including being listed as # 6 in North America in EID in 2010. She is a much sought after judge in PSA-recognized international exhibitions; judging

abroad and in the USA. In addition she has judged for local camera clubs and the New England Council of Camera Club's Electronic Interclub year-end competition. In the past, Elena has been a contributor to the TOPS in photography program in CPID.

In 2013 her images were exhibited at the *Galerie Salon de Fleur* in Tokyo, Japan as part of a PSA Board of Director's exhibition held by gallery owner and PSA member **Jessica Hashizume**. In October 2013 she traveled to Hong Kong to be part of the PSA joint exhibition with the Photographic Salon Exhibitors Association (PSEA), which was celebrating its 50th anniversary by presenting the works of Top Ten Exhibitors in the *PSA's Who's Who in Photography* lists from different years, dating back to the 1950's; the most representative works and biographies were published in a commemorative album. Elena earned her Recognition of Photographic Proficiency Distinction (PPSA) in 2010 and her Excellence Distinction (EPSA) in 2012.

Upon joining the Society, Elena became a member of the Yahoo Photoeditor's group and soon volunteered to be the group's monitor and the Director of the PSA Newsletter Competition. In 2006 she was awarded both the Early Achievement and Regional Director of the Year Awards. She also began writing feature articles for the *PSA Journal* and that led to her nomination to the PSA Board of Directors, as the Publications Vice President and Managing Editor of the *PSA Journal* from 2007 until 2013. She is presently a member of the Executive Committee of the Society's Board of Directors and holds the position of Secretary. In 2009 she was elected an Associate (APSA) of PSA.

As Publications Vice President Elena instituted many new features in the *PSA Journal*: It is now an all-color publication, with improved paper and print quality; In May of 2011, the *Journal* published its first all 3D issue; And, in 2013 the new digital *Journal* was introduced. In addition to her required writings for the *Journal*, since 2004 Elena has written 11 feature articles and earned her first Gold Editorial Star in 2011.

Locally, Elena belongs to the Ocean County Camera Club in New Jersey where she has served as Co-Director of the club's PSA Youth Photography Showcase participation, Chair of the Nominating Committee (2010), 1st Vice Chair in charge of procuring monthly judges (2010 – 2011), and PSA Interclub representative for the EID and PPD competitions (2009 – 2011). In 2010 she received the club's President's Award for outstanding service.

Elena likes to tell people that she entered photography through the backdoor. "I was already working with Photoshop® restoring old pictures when I began to run out of images. I was having so much fun with the computer that I decided to start taking my own pictures and I joined the Ocean County Camera Club, where I received plenty of help and encouragement."

A widow, Elena resides in Sea Girt, New Jersey near her grandchildren, and part time in Highland Beach, Florida. She worked for 17 years as a registered nurse, and with her husband, she was a co-owner of Tek Systems (an outpatient kidney dialysis company). Presently she owns and operates a rental management firm. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Business from Ramapo College in New Jersey.



White Capped Horse

Muddy Horse



Technique

Photos © Elena McTighe,
APSA, EPSA

When photographing horses, or any animal for that matter, it is good to learn something about your subject first. Horses used for racing, jumping, dressage, rodeos or horse shows are in superb condition and their anatomical makeup makes it possible to photograph and see the outline of bulging muscles and throbbing blood vessels while the horse is in action. Horses are emotional creatures and are easily startled. NEVER use flash when shooting a horse as it may spook the animal and result in injury to yourself or the rider. Horses are big animals; a thoroughbred horse can weigh 1,100 pounds and stand 62 – 68 inches (157 – 173 cm) high. Respect their size and spirit and take great care when around horses; never pass close behind them as they may rear-out to strike with their hooves, and when at a horse arena keep in mind that horses and riders may be passing in front and behind you; give them ample room. (While I love horses, oddly enough I am allergic to them, so keeping a safe distance comes naturally to me.)

Before your shooting session, think about your goals. If you are at a horse race, you want to obtain a photo of a thoroughbred racing at 35-40 miles per hour landing on one leg—the incredible speed places inconceivable torque on the animal's joints; at a jumping event, think about getting the horse with all four hooves up in the air or perhaps the tail shot straight up as it crosses the hurdle; barrel races are fun and you would want to shoot the horse and rider as they pass as close to the barrel as possible. All of these goals require timing and timing comes with practice and experience.

Positioning yourself at a horse event is of utmost importance. Backgrounds can be really ugly (people, cars, trucks, white tents, etc.), so come early and take time to walk around and to find what angle will afford you the best background. At a jumping event, talking to officials and other photographers may help you to learn which hurdle is ideal for shooting your images.

When photographing a horse race, it is best to bring a lens with a range of 400 mm, but all other events can be successfully shot at 70-300 mm. Your subject is very large, so a large lens (400 mm +) is not necessary. If you arrive early, you can take some test shots of the horses warming up in the arena. I always shoot on Aperture mode, usually f/5 to f/9, and I keep my shutter speed over 1/1000 by adjusting the ISO. Today's modern cameras allow for high ISOs with very little noise. Constantly check your histogram to make sure your exposure is correct. The early images (race horses) were shot with either a Panasonic Lumix DMC-FX50 or a Nikon 100D and 200D, on a tripod. The later shots were taken with a Nikon D300s, which is a much faster camera and can be hand held at high ISOs.



Blue Shirt Rider



Ouch



Artist's Statement

Although I appreciate and shoot all kinds of photography, I seem to have an affinity for bird and animal images. When photographing such creatures, it is my intention to not only tell a story, but to show the anatomical makeup of the creature that I am shooting. I get an absolute thrill when my image sharply defines feathers or beaks or the musculature and vascular system of a mammal. And when the animal is in motion, I try to achieve the stop-action image that shows what is implausible to readily see with the naked eye. Very often I am so enthralled with the subject that I simply use my lens as an optical means of watching the action in front of me. When viewing birds or animals as they interact with each other, it is hard not to believe that they do not show emotions and to capture an image where the subject is clearly displaying an emotion is another goal of my photography. I am in awe of nature and to me this type of photography is a spiritual journey. When others view my images, I want them to feel the same wonder, reverence, and spiritual feeling that I am experiencing.



Red Jockey