

# PSA PORTFOLIOS

## A Program Lifts Off

I was asked to provide some thoughts about the PSA Portfolio Assessment program. Members are aware that this program is new to PSA. It is described in the *PSA Journal*, on the PSA Website, in the PSA social media, in PSA email messages to members, and in presentations at the PSA Annual Conferences. Many members have already participated in the program's assessment process, and have learned what it is all about. Quite a number of them have been awarded distinctions for their work. My purpose is to first give you my own answer to the question, "Why portfolios,?" then briefly describe the **Beginnings** and **Implementation** of the program. Finally, I invite you to **give portfolios a try**. In later articles, I hope to mention other portfolio program and assessment subjects.

PSA educational courses. I took advantage of some of those opportunities as time permitted. I became interested in the challenge of creating presentations of images built around themes, such as building a show for a gallery, or creating a book or magazine article, or putting together a quality portfolio. All of these involved establishing a goal or purpose, and selecting a theme. Then the challenge was to do an in-depth and thoughtful look through images to select those which were strong images (demonstrating a variety of technical and artistic skills), which delivered on the statement of intent, and worked well together (which is observed by looking to see how well they go together as elements in an "overview image.")



By  
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### Why Portfolios?

PSA is first and foremost an educational organization. A portfolio program was a logical addition to PSA-member educational services. In my own case, study group and then exhibition participation were valuable learning environments for me for some years; but I needed something more than peer evaluations and exhibition competition to grow as a photographer. Other helpful PSA programs were available to me, including the presentations and offerings at the PSA Annual Conferences, and opportunities provided by Chapters, Clubs and Councils, and

### Beginnings

In the middle of my four-year term as PSA President (2011-15), I became interested in the portfolio programs of the Royal Photographic Society (RPS), the International Federation of Photographic Arts (FIAP), the Global Photographers Union (GPU), and the Photographic Society of South Africa (PSSA). I had conversations about portfolios with leaders from these organizations. I was aware that many school photography programs use portfolios as a teaching and learning tool. Portfolio skills are important to creating photo books, in preparing magazine articles, or in submitting work to



Assessing one print. Photo © Jim Goins

galleries. It was clear to me and to others in PSA that a portfolio assessment program would be an excellent educational opportunity for PSA members, and as popular a member service as it has been in these other organizations. At my last Board meeting in September, 2015, the PSA Directors enthusiastically passed the measure which established the portfolio program including a distinction for successful portfolios. I asked **Jill Sneesby, APSA**, then the PSA International Relationships Vice President from South Africa, who had experience in the portfolio system in PSSA, FIAP and RPS, to Chair the newly formed Portfolio Assessment Committee. She turned around and twisted my arm until it hurt horribly, perhaps thinking I needed something to keep me busy as I left the Board, and appointed me as Vice-Chair and assessment coordinator. The committee quickly filled with other volunteers. Actually, I was eager to be a part of this effort. We were off and running. I am grateful for the continued enthusiastic support of the PSA Directors and for the hard work of all the talented volunteers who are doing wonderful things to make this program lift off.

### Implementation

The Committee created an assessment process, incorporating ideas and best practices from other portfolio programs, and found volunteers who agreed to become assessors and support staff. An assessor training program was created and 17 PSA members with excellent credentials were selected and trained as assessors. A schedule for the first assessments was set and assessments

took place (in California in June 2016, Florida in January 2017, and Massachusetts in June 2017). In 2018, assessments are planned for Florida in January and Washington State in the summer. Implementation also includes the current work of improving the scoring software, working on the reporting system, testing and acquiring appropriate equipment, and establishing and modifying operating procedures in order to incorporate 3D photography into the program beginning in 2018. Inside the assessment room, the process is dynamic. Just as a short note on the process, the five assessors are encouraged to discuss at length the elements of each portfolio, and defend their decisions about these elements. Based on discussion, minds will change on scoring. They arrive at a majority opinion and review their joint decision to be sure they have fairly assessed the work of the participants. It is an exciting and educational process for assessors and support staff. Those involved, including support staff, learn from each other over the three to four days required to review and report on all the portfolios.

### Give portfolios a try!

Please do not feel like you need to be an expert photographer to create and enter a portfolio. You do not need to wait to accumulate 10 gold-medal images. Treat this as another phase in your development as a photographer. Study, select, organize and show your work. The assessors carefully avoid knowing who you are as they do their work. If your portfolio is accepted, chances are good that many will know who you are and see your portfolio, and you will receive a distinction after your name for your effort. ■



## Change of Email Address

Members change email addresses frequently, but sometimes they forget to tell PSA!

Please advise PSA Headquarters, all Divisions in which you work as a volunteer, and all individual PSA contacts. You can also visit the PSA website to update your email address.

**hq@psa-photo.org**

**Register Now!**

**Pittsburgh**  
**October 8th - October 14th**

Visit [www.psa-photo.org](http://www.psa-photo.org) for more information

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