

STARTING OUT ON THE EXHIBITION TRAIL

Dave Coates ARPS EFIAP/g PPSA MPAGB APAGB; FIAP Liaison Officer

Taking part in International Exhibitions and Salons (we'll call them exhibitions from now for simplicity) can be most rewarding. If the bug gets you, you can become drawn in for a several years. Starting out is simple. You read the instructions, complete your entry and with a little luck and skill you get your first acceptances. You gain a few more and then learn of awards granted by FIAP or PSA, who are the principle organisations involved in "Patronising" or "Recognising" exhibitions world wide.

This is where, you can come unstuck. I will not tell you how to take pictures; I would not presume to do that. This is about how you organise yourself and keep records so, when applying for an award, you don't have the problems that some suffer from. For the purpose of this article I will deal mainly with matters relating to FIAP, although some reference to PSA may be helpful.

In the case of FIAP, whilst they recognise the various sections, such as Open, General, Nature, Photo-Travel, Colour Print, Monochrome Print etc, when it comes to working out whether you are qualified for an award, acceptances and awards from different sections are treated equally and are in effect lumped together. All that is required is that the particular exhibition is 'patronised' by FIAP. Here can be the first trap.

It is not unusual for a salon to be patronised by FIAP one year and then not the next. It is also not unusual for an exhibitor, having entered the salon whilst patronised not to notice that it was not the next year. Some Sections in a salon may be Patronised and others not. So make sure of FIAP Patronisation. It will be on the exhibition paperwork, usually the year followed by a 3 digit number (Eg: - 2011/023). Separate parts of a circuit will have different FIAP Numbers.

With PSA, there are separate divisions that are responsible for particular sections, such as Open, Nature etc, and you have to apply to each separately for many awards. If you are interested in PSA, or may be in the future, you need to record which sections you receive acceptances in, and if 'Recognised' by PSA.

RECORDS

To apply for a FIAP award you will need to complete a record of your acceptances on what they call a "Dossier File". This file can be supplied by the FIAP Liaison Officer to you, along with comprehensive guidelines for completing your application, or you can download it from the FIAP web site **. FIAP now insist you complete and submit it electronically, as well as supplying a 'hard copy'. They will not accept handwritten entries, nor will they accept adhoc print outs attached to the dossier. The FIAP "Dossier File" is prepared on Microsoft Excel. You may therefore wish to keep your exhibition records on Excel; it will save you a lot of hassle later on. The data needed on the part of the dossier recording your Acceptances is:-

1. The title of each accepted photograph.
2. The Name of the Exhibition, and if a circuit, the part of the circuit you got the acceptance in.
3. The name of the country where the Exhibition is held.
4. The FIAP Number allocated to the Exhibition or part of the circuit.
5. If any Award has been achieved with an acceptance.

Your file should have columns for all this data, along with any other you decide to keep. You should collect and record this data as you go along and it does need to be set out in a specific order:-

- a) All acceptances for any one given photograph must be grouped together.
- b) The acceptances for each photograph in a group need to be ordered as they were received as acceptances. There is some leeway on this and perhaps the FIAP Number can be used to create this ordering. It is not perfect but it will group them into years, and this should be sufficient.
- c) The different groups of acceptances must also be in a particular order. The first group of acceptances must be for the photograph for which you received your first acceptance. The next group must be for the next photograph that you got an acceptance for and so on. They MUST NOT be grouped in alphabetical order of the titles.

You therefore need to be able to indentify the correct order to comply with 'c)' above. The easiest way to do this is to include an extra column in your file, perhaps called 'Title Number'. Then you give the first title that receives an acceptance the number '1', the second '2' and so on and append this number alongside every acceptance. Sorting your entries will then become a simple 'sort' process.

Please understand that the above requirements are there for very good practical reasons and applications for FIAP awards that do not comply with them will be referred back to you for correction.

In this respect other experienced exhibitors have commented that you should avoid using the 'definite article' and 'indefinite article' at the beginning of titles; it can save confusion when searching your database.

*** A word of caution: FIAP have a track record of changing their rules at short notice, therefore it is unwise to download the Dossier File before you are about to make an application for an award. You will also not have the benefit of the guidelines to help through the application process.*

TITLES

We now come to another issue that comes up rather too often. Sadly there are those among us who are prepared to cheat to achieve awards. The use of more than one title for a single photograph is one method used. There are others. Therefore there is a need to protect the integrity of exhibitions.

Firstly, every photograph must be given a title. The use of "untitled", whilst sometimes acceptable in Exhibitions, will not be acceptable when applying for awards, so acceptances without a title won't count.

Secondly, the title given to a photograph should be unique in your records. Once you have given a particular photograph a title that title should stay with that photograph. It should not be given to another photograph and that photograph should not be given a different title, no matter what sections you enter it in. If you enter a title in different sections, eg Open and Photo-Travel for example, the latter may need a more descriptive title than the former. Take this into account in giving it a title.

Whilst we do have a mechanism within FIAP for dealing with problems where an image has accidentally been given a second title, PSA have laid down very strict guidelines on this subject. You will be well advised to treat this item with care.

On the subject of titles, the practice of using the same title for different images, differentiated by a number is to be strongly discouraged. This is because some Exhibitions do not include such numbers in their catalogues; consequently such acceptances may not be verifiable.

Many exhibitions place arbitrary limits on the length of titles. This can vary from 25 to 35 characters including spaces. With 'on-line' entry systems that refuse a title if it does not comply, you need to bear this in mind as well. Nature Section entrants can save themselves effort by not adding Latin sub-titles; they are rarely if ever read out to the selectors and even more rarely are they included in catalogues.

KEEPING UP TO DATE

If you have not already done so, you are strongly advised to subscribe to [PAGB 'e-news'](#) as we are now using it and also the PAGB website at www.pagb-photography-uk.co.uk to circulate information. You can subscribe to PAGB 'e-news' very simply via the web site.

FINALLY

The above may seem complicated, but it is really quite simple and largely commonsense. I can speak from experience and say that once you get your organisation correct you should find it relatively straight forward and the lack of consequent hassle will hopefully enable you to enjoy Exhibition Photography all the more.



Dave Coates ARPS EFIAP/g PPSA MPAGB APAGB