



Focusing on...

Fourteen Tips for Photographing in Public

Mike Johnston

I recently wrote a post on The Online Photographer (TOP) called *Giving Us a Power We Don't Have*, about the new anti-photographer laws in the United Kingdom. The post drew a great many thoughtful comments from TOP readers, but I thought it might also be apropos to impart a few tips of a more immediately practical nature concerning photographing in public. These are just a few of the ways I know of or have heard of over the years to avoid attracting attention, and of dealing with trouble when it arises.

Use either a very big camera, or a very small camera. People seldom feel threatened by a tiny camera the size of the Sigma DP-1 or Panasonic LX3, but they also don't feel very threatened by a giant, clumsy view camera on a tripod (they are also seldom aware of "the moment it clicks" with a big view camera, since you're not looking through the camera when you take the picture). I suspect that setting up a big camera makes you less of a threat because it immobilizes you; you can't go sneaking about with one of those. You're also given an opportunity to confidently pretend that you have every right to be doing what you're doing. Of course, you're subject to tripod restrictions in very public places such as crowded city sidewalks and tourist attractions, so do your homework ahead of time and be sure you have a permit if you need one.

(continued on page 6)

~ INSIDE ~

<i>Exhibitions / Calls to Artists</i>	2
<i>Bulletin Board</i>	3
<i>Competition Results</i>	4
<i>Field Trips 2010</i>	5
<i>Forum Feature</i>	8

~ CALENDAR ~

APRIL

- 02 Competition entries due 12:00m
- 06 Board Meeting 7:00pm, LBA&G Center
- 08 Competition Meeting 7:00pm
- 22 Program: Black and White Salon, with Marty Knapp 7:00pm
- 24 Newsletter items to Sheri

MAY

- 07 Competition entries due 12:00m
- 13 Competition Meeting 7:00pm
- 21 Newsletter items to Sheri
- 27 Program: Clark Olmholz, Color Management 7:00pm

JUNE

- 04 Competition entries due 12:00m
- 10 Competition Meeting 7:00pm
- 24 Calendar images due
Program: H Bruensteiner and S Prager, topic to be determined
Show of field trip images
- 26 Newsletter items to Sheri

~ EXHIBITIONS AND ONGOING CALLS TO ARTISTS ~

EXHIBITIONS, ETC.

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

Here is an opportunity for you to participate in and experience competition in world-wide exhibitions. These Exhibitions are open to every photographer.

Depending on the individual exhibition, the categories are: Color Projected Images (digital and slides), Electronic Imaging, Nature (general and wildlife), Photo Travel, Photo Journalism, and Prints, and sometimes special categories and themes. Some exhibitions are EID only, some are slide only and some are dual projected competitions.

Each Exhibition has a closing date and an entry fee, and most produce a catalog of the accepted entries. Usually 25-30% of the entries are accepted and exhibited in their local areas. European Exhibitions are noted for producing beautiful color catalogs with award winning entries.

Most Exhibitions have printable entry forms available on www.exhibitionforms.com/. Personally, I have had successful entries in European Countries, India, United Kingdom, and Asia Exhibitions, to name a few.

The Photographic Society of America (PSA) supports only those International Exhibitions that conform to the standards of the PSA Society. These are listed in the back of the PSA Journal or on the PSA website (www.psa-photo.org/competitions).

Congratulations to Joe Simons, who has earned two PSA Stars in Color Projected Image Category and three PSA stars in Nature Division Exhibitions.

Note that PSA conducts only one Exhibition each year. This is held in August and the accepted images are exhibited at the annual PSA conference in September.

Check out www.psa-photo.org/competitions for more information.

You may also request more information from Elvira Lavell, EPSA, club PSA representative. (See SRPS roster for Elvira's contact information)

ONGOING CALLS TO ARTISTS

Santa Rosa Recreation and Parks

Department: Exhibits at Finley and Steele Lane Community Centers and City Hall. To apply, go to Finley Community Center, 2060 West College Avenue, Santa Rosa, to pick up an application. Community Center hours are Monday - Friday, 8:00 am - 7:00 pm and on Saturday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. For further information, call 707-543-4512; contact is Tara Matheny-Schuster, email tmatheny_schuster@srcity.org

The Atrium Gallery at Marin General Hospital mounts four shows a year of "healing art." The gallery is looking for local artists for future shows. Previous artists have included Ernest Braun. Send slides and SASE to Wende Heath, Institute for Health and Healing, PO Box 8010, San Rafael, CA 94912.

National Photography Exhibit

Transference of Light

DEADLINE: Friday 7 May 2010.

Exhibit: 2 July - 1 August

Location: Santa Cruz Art League, Santa Cruz, CA.

Juror: Brian Taylor. Juror will grant \$1000 in awards.

Up to three entries/\$40.

Prospectus: www.scal.org /or send SASE to SCAL, 526 Broadway, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Info: cindy@scal.org 831-426-5787

~ MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION ~

SPRS WEBSITE

<http://www.santarosaphotographicsociety.org/>

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION AND CORRECTIONS:

Contact Sheri Prager, Editor, The Positive Print
See SRPS roster for email address

~ PROGRAM MEETING ~

22 April 2010

The second meeting program in April is devoted to black and white photography. The program will start with a talk by Marty Knapp, who is well known for his beautiful black and white landscapes of Point Reyes and environs. Most of us are familiar with the wonderful prints on display at his studio in Point Reyes Station.

After the refreshment break we will have a black and white salon. Marty has graciously agreed to serve as a panelist, along with club members Jerry Meshulam and Dave Henneman. Because prints have been the traditional way to present black and white images, the salon will start with presentation and discussion of prints, with lighting appropriate for that medium, and then move to EI. Images will be discussed and critiqued, but not judged. After comments from the panel the image maker is invited to explain, rebut, describe motivation and technique, whatever he or she cares to contribute. The audience is also invited to add their comments and questions to what we hope will be a lively exchange of views.

This is an opportunity to have your images reviewed by a recognized master of black and white, as well as two of our most experienced club members. Whether you are an old hand at traditional black and white, or just starting to explore the opportunities for black and white in Photoshop, we hope you will participate by submitting an image, either print or EI. Prints must be matted. Framing is optional but desirable. There is no limitation on subject matter or date of image acquisition. If you submit a print, please bring an easel to the meeting so it can be displayed throughout the evening.

Images are submitted using the same website and procedure as for club competition. Go to the website <http://srps.photoclubservices.com> and after log in you can find "B&W Salon" listed under Competitions. If you check Print then only the title has to be entered. For EI the usual pixel dimensions still hold. The deadline for submitting images is April 20. Please submit an image and help make the salon a success.

Bob Alwitt
Program Committee

Please join Marty and fellow club members at dinner before the meeting. We will dine at Kirin, 2700 Yulupa Avenue, at 5:30. To make a reservation send email to Bob Alwitt no later than April 20th.

MARCH COMPETITION RESULTS

GENERAL

General B

1st	Gatherings: Fall 2009	Peter M. Krohn
2nd	Comb Jelly 3	Darryl Henke
3rd	Delicate Folds	Katrina Thomas

General A

1st	Waves At Goat Rock Beach	Adele Wikner
2nd	Nodding Daisy	Dick Weston
3rd	Horse heaven	Kevin O'Connor

General AA

1st	Laguna Reflection	Gary Saxe
2nd	Mom and Baby Moose	Linda Caldwell
3rd	Frightened Young Boy	Joe Simons

General M

1st	Pigeon Point Sunset	H Bruensteiner
2nd	Sunburst	H Bruensteiner
3rd	So much depends upon a red barn	Jerry Meshulam

NATURE

Nature B

1st	Monkey in Bali	Linda Thomas
2nd	Chestnut Chickadee	Anne Abrams
3rd	Ladybugs	Ken Hutchins

Nature A

1st	Flamingo Tongue Snail	Robert Walker
2nd	Fungi and moss	Kevin O'Connor
3rd	Cautious Fawns pass Great White Egret	T. J. Mills

Nature AA

1st	Building a Nest	Harold Moore
2nd	Relaxed Egret Flight	Joe Simons
3rd	Mourning Dove	Phillip Hann

Nature M

1st	Sandhill Crane, Morning Flyout	Diane Miller
2nd	Iguassu Falls	Jerry Meshulam
3rd	Sunset on a bristlecone pine	Russ Dieter

CREATIVE

Creative B

1st	Atomic Egg	Phil Wright
2nd	Lobelia with Spiders	Barb Nebel
3rd	Venice Beach rapper	Terry Connelly

Creative A

1st	Sinuous	Lorna Peters
2nd	None	
3rd	None	

Creative AA

1st	Clouds	Marilyn Caven
2nd	Orbital Dandelion Puff	Marilyn Caven
3rd	Lost Luggage	Phillip Hann

Creative M

1st	The Angel of the North	Edmond Bridant
2nd	found old daguerreotype	Tania Amochaev
3rd	An Artist's Vision	Marilyn Brooner

2009 End of Year Winners M—General

"DAWN PATROL" BY DIANE MILLER



MANY THANKS TO BLAKE DAVIS FOR JUDGING THE MARCH COMPETITION.

~ FIELD TRIPS 2010 ~

There are no field trips scheduled for April.

(continued from page 1)

1. Have examples of your work with you. I heard that Joel Meyerowitz used to carry a copy of his book *Cape Light* with him when he was working on his book *Redheads*, as a way of explaining himself. In his case, it was mainly for the benefit of the people he was trying to photograph, not to get out of jams with rent-a-cops, but it might be useful for all sorts of people who might [challenge](#) you. By showing them what you do and what you're after, they should be able to infer that you're not after something else more sinister.
2. Carry a business card and give it away freely. If you're stopped or threatened, a card goes a long way toward explaining who you are and implies that you have nothing to hide.
3. Have a rap and have it ready. You'll be more prepared if you go out assuming you'll be challenged. Be ready, don't take it personally, and have a *spiel* ready to go that emphasizes that you're a hobbyist, tourist, or shutterbug—or that most indeterminate sort of slacker, an artist!
4. When a Dwight Schrute yells at you, approach him with your hand out, and introduce yourself. Rent-a-cops and other security types aren't used to having bad guys come toward them; they're used to having bad guys run away or retreat. Give 'em a little respect and act forthrightly. A little respect doesn't always work, but it sometimes does, and it can't hurt. It's cheap to you.
5. Ask them for help. Asking someone for help changes your relationship to them. This works with potential thieves—you turn yourself from their prey into their beneficiary, and them from predators into good Samaritans—and it works with cops and guards too, whose job it often is to help people, after all. Have a question ready to go for when someone approaches you or hassles you.
6. Be aware that many civilians who hassle you are exhibiting guilty consciences. They're nervous about something and they're worried you're getting the scoop on them. Try photographing around active private construction and see if you don't find this out lightning-fast! Ordinary citizens break all kinds of laws all the time. A snoop with a camera represents a threat to a guy who is hiding a car from the repo man or has recently burned a pile of branches and leaves in violation of village ordinances. This sort of thing, in infinite variety, is more widespread than you might think. So just try to be aware of what might be motivating the other person, and you'll know better how to defuse them.
7. Have an escape plan when you trespass! And be aware that *you're* the one breaking the law.
8. Use a disguise. I'm sort of kidding, but from what I hear, Elliott Erwitt often dresses rather extravagantly like the stereotype of a tourist. Your photo vest and Nikon cap and your big bag chock-full of never-used lenses might make you feel all like the big pro, but this can backfire. If you want to be taken for no threat, look the part.
9. Use a decoy. Speaking of Erwitt, he would often pretend to photograph a family member posing in front of him while he was actually photographing past them with a telephoto lens. Also speaking of Erwitt, take a look through his books sometime and think about how many of the pictures would have to put him in a position where he really shouldn't be taking pictures. It's a knack, folks.

(continued on page 7)

(continued from page 6)

10. Hang around. You'll look like a threat if you stop suddenly, stare at a stranger, and take ten pictures. But if you stop and hang out in a spot for twenty minutes, everyone who's curious will have already checked you out, and you'll become background. Then you can take your ten pictures and nobody will pay any attention. I used to do this on boardwalks on the East Coast. It works. You could also try paying a few local loiterers to be escorts or tour-guides. I never tried this because I never had enough extra money, but I always wanted to.
11. Lie. For years I carried a simple piece of paper in an envelope that said something like, "To Whom It May Concern, Mike Johnston has permission to photograph here. Please offer him every assistance." You'd be amazed. I also once convinced a citizen that I was an official from Washington by holding up my open wallet at him, police-style, as I approached, putting it away before he had a chance to see what it was. This might not seem very ethical, but look, a lot of the people who are hassling you have utterly no right or authority to hassle you. It's not the worst sin in the world to return the favor. You could also consider trying to get real credentials from some official or quasi-official organization.
12. Work on your camera skills! Good shooters work fast. Cartier-Bresson could reportedly get his Leica to his eye and back almost literally faster than people could notice. If you want to avoid attracting attention, don't stand there like a big dork futzing endlessly with your camera controls and staring through the viewfinder for minutes on end. Waist-level finders help with this too, because when you look through an eye-level finder, people feel like you're looking at them, whereas when you look down at some device you're apparently fiddling with, people assume you're looking at the device and *not* at them.
13. Adjust the camera while looking in a different direction. Then take the picture you want to take as though it were an afterthought, and do it quickly. A bored bouncer at a bar doesn't have an excuse to stride across the street and hassle you if you're pointing the camera down the street and not at his bar; and if you take one shot in his direction and then turn and leave, you remove his opportunity to challenge you.

Of course, the most important thing is to be comfortable with how you decide to work. Personally, I don't practice any of the "tricks" named above; I've discovered I work best when I have permission, either explicit or implicit, to photograph. It simply makes me more comfortable and helps me do better work. So now I just get permission, and if I don't have it, I don't take pictures. Simple and clean. Similarly, I'd urge you to stay within your own "comfort zone"—once you find out what that is.

In any event, good luck. And to quote the Sarge on the great old cop show Hill Street Blues, "Let's be careful out there."

About the Author

Mike Johnston has written more than 250 magazine articles and many columns for photo.net. He now edits the popular blog [The Online Photographer](#).

~ FORUM FEATURE ~

Isanjo Black and White

28 February 2010

Terry Connelly

I took this on that walk I took to Isanjo a while back. The color version didn't show the lighting that I felt was there so I thought black and white might bring it out. I also enhanced the light on the tree and a few of the foreground rocks a bit. Comments appreciated.



Jerry Meshulam

Beautiful scene. One of my first 4x5 black and white landscapes was shot at Fairfield Osborn Preserve and had a very similar look with a prominent oak tree. I like the offset placement of the oak but it looks a little too cut off on the left. There's just not quite enough of interest on the right side so if you moved the camera just a tad to the left, not enough to include the whole tree but just enough to bring the right side of the tree's canopy about a third of the distance to the right edge of the photo, I think it would improve the balance. I would also like to see the contrast toned down just a little. It's dramatic as it is, but it lacks that long, smooth midtone range.

(continued on page 9)

(continued from page 8)

Terry Connelly

Thank you Jerry, I really appreciate your suggestions. I wasn't sure what you meant by the crop but this was what I came up with. I tried to bring out the midtone range better also. I am working toward trying to understand the zone system better so I really appreciate yours and Diane's recent comments. It feels a little flat to me now though. Any suggestions anyone?



Howard Bruensteiner

This last crop with more on the left presents a much more balanced feeling image. The hill in the distance as well as being able to see where the tree makes a clear downward turn on the left are important in achieving this. But the distant hill is also a bit of a distraction. I'd call it Ambivalent Hill. It helps balance the composition and completes the distant horizon. But it also draws too much attention to itself. I wonder if lightening it somewhat would help.

Diane Miller

I think this version is a big improvement in tonality. The first has very heavy contrast. Your monitor may not be showing things accurately. Are you calibrated and profiled? Look at the two histograms (without the mat and frame) and you will see the first one is pushed against both walls. The second tapers to the corners. If you want a harsh effect, fine, but that is not what I would look for in a landscape.

(continued on page 10)

(continued from page 9)

Terry Connelly

Diane, No, I am not calibrated or profiled. I have heard this talked about and know I need to learn how and do it. To be honest I am intimidated by it. I get what you are saying about the histogram. That visual helps my understanding.

Howard thank you I am going to try your suggestion.

Jerry Meshulam

You've gotten the crop much better in this version. The overall tonality is improved and I understand your concern about it being flat. In black and white photography you often hear the term "local contrast." When you lower the overall contrast to expand the midtones that doesn't mean you have forgo all the drama of some higher contrast spots.

In a scene like yours there are two methods that I would think of for enhancing some local contrast. One method is to create some quick masks in Photoshop for the areas where you want to do that.

Just click the quick mask button, draw the mask with a soft edged paint brush, click the quick mask button again to create the selection then adjust the contrast with a curves (and maybe some levels) adjustment layers.

The other way, one that I use a lot, is to add a layer, set it to overlay and check the "fill with 50% gray." Then with the soft edged paint brush set somewhere between 2% to 6% opacity, do your dodging and burning. I rarely dodge or burn with more than 6% opacity.

Best to go over and over with the brush rather than trying to get it all with one stroke. With the foreground color set to black you burn and white will dodge. Use the "X" key to easily switch between the two.

I like this method for many reasons. You're working on a separate layer so you don't mess up the original. You can tweak it endlessly to get just the right look. You get the best look of depth in a black and white scene with overlapping layers of light and dark.

This image deserves the time. With some selective burning and dodging you'll have a very strong contender for end of year winner or AI Shelton print winner.

Diane Miller

Jerry, your reasons for liking the 50% gray overlay method are equally true for masked adjustment layers -- the first method you mention. And of course you can overlap separate adjustments with this method as well.

The 50% overlay method only lets you lighten and darken in a generic way. With a masked adjustment layer using a Curve, you have independent control of lightening and darkening in the lights, mid tones and darks. And you can alter color balance by using the color channels. And you can change the mode to Luminosity if the adjustment causes too much saturation. And it is easier to edit a mask. Tweaking a 50% overlay can be a nightmare if it has any complexity, especially if it has both lightening and darkening on the same layer. Look at it by turning off all other layers (Alt-click on its eyeball) and you will see that it could take sophisticated and tedious brushing or cloning to alter it with any control.

And of course with the quick mask method you can do any adjustment than can be applied as a layer, not just lightening and darkening.

(continued on page 11)

continued from page 10)

Terry Connelly

Thank you Jerry and Diane. I can't wait to try this first chance I get. I really have not done any dodging or burning so this will be a tremendous boon to my learning curve. Thank you so much and thank you for the compliment Jerry. I will consider this once I have perfected what I am doing here better.

Jerry Meshulam

Thanks for pointing that out, Diane, and that and that's why I use the masks too, but for dialing in the exact tones I want, especially when working in black and white, I tend to work more often with the overlay method. If I had to draw a mask for every location where I'm altering the contrast, I'd have hundreds of them. Using the overlay layer and working on my Wacom tablet I'm constantly varying the brush diameter and image size and white or black to get exactly what I want in each location.

There is one major disadvantage of the overlay method for dodging and burning that I should point out. You quickly run out of history steps so if you need to back track you can be in trouble. There are a few ways around that though. You can take snapshots or use separate overlay layers to work on various sections of an image. If you get hopelessly off base in an area and you need to dump that layer, you're not starting over for the whole dodge and burn job.

Maybe it comes down to replicating what I used to do in the darkroom with potassium ferrocyanide bleaching. Using a variety of brushes from minuscule fine tipped to fat Japanese calligraphy brushes I painstakingly altered the contrast by carefully bleaching out the silver, little bits at a time.

Of course there was no history button to click if you overdid it with the bleach.

Diane Miller

But to the extent that one curve works for different areas, its mask can have many different "holes" in it and each "hole" can have varying opacities (using a partial opacity brush) or as complex a shape and edge softness as desired. Once the rough mask is made you can modify it by looking at it as either a translucent overlay or in black and white, and you can brush changes into it with it being invisible and just the image showing, reflecting the exact adjustments, as you would see with the 50% overlay method. And of course you can stack as many layers as needed. That gives you a permanent history, to be altered any time. And the details of the adjustment are so much more flexible with a curve.

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Terry Connelly

I made time to work on the suggestions you shared with me and here is what I came up with.



I tried both ways as well as Lightroom. What I found was both ways seemed achieve much the same results. The benefit I saw in the method you suggested, Jerry, was that I could see the changes as they happened pretty much. The changes are subtle in both so that made it more challenging. The benefit I experienced in yours, Diane, is that it was less time consuming. By going to Channels I could also see the changes I was making more clearly, but I had to toggle back and forth. I found both had their + points and I will use both at different times for different needs. Thank you both, this was a wonderful lesson in "local contrast." Please let me know if you see more that can be improved here. I wonder if I did enough or need to do more with these methods.

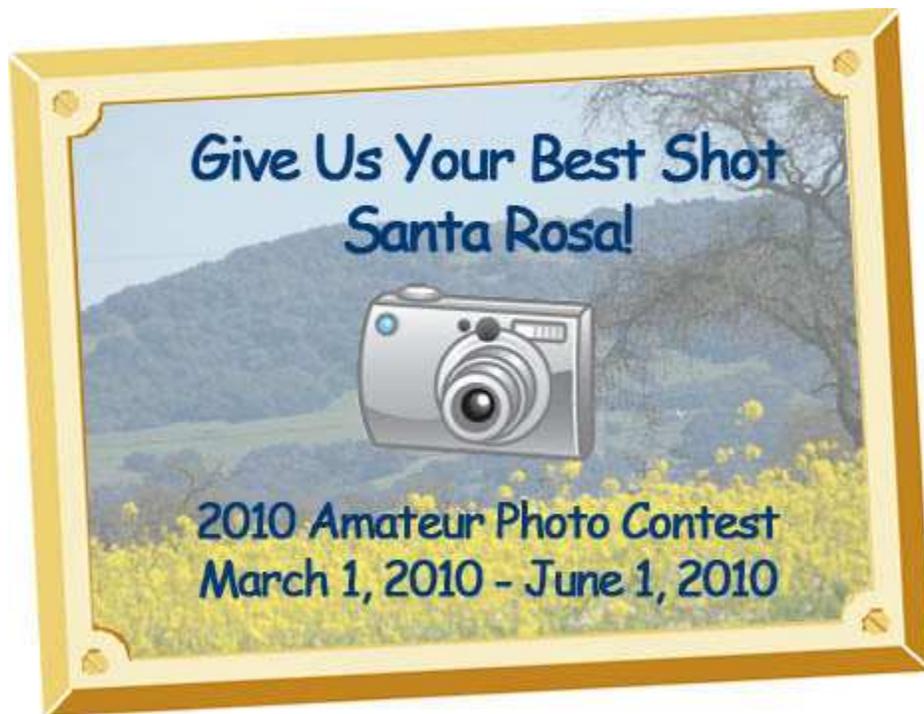
Now I need to go back and learn Greg's animation so I can show the changes more clearly.

Jerry Meshulam

I think you'll agree that as good as the first version was, this is even better. Well done. The only suggestions I have at this point are some very picky ones with the foreground. The lower right corner is light and I think it looks best to have it darker at the edges, but be careful it's not obvious.

There are a few foreground areas with subtle diagonal (lower left to upper right direction) that could be slightly darkened to help give depth leading into the scene. Again, not to be obvious with it.

Overall though you've achieved that long tonal range quality that was missing the first version.



Welcome to the second Annual *Give Us Your Best Shot Santa Rosa* amateur photo contest! Because of last year's success, we have decided to make this photo contest an annual event. We received hundreds of wonderful photo entries and we anticipate a huge response again this year. If you haven't had an opportunity to view the photo entries, please check out our slide show. This year's contest kick off is Monday, March 1, 2010 and the closing date is June 1, 2010. The categories are as follows: *Nature Scene, My Neighborhood, Garden, A Day in the Life* and *Best of Santa Rosa*. We've also added an *Under 18 Youth Category* to include *Favorite Place* and *Fun Stuff*.

ALL PHOTOS MUST BE TAKEN WITHIN THE CITY OF SANTA ROSA.

The winning prize in the Youth Category will be an *iPod Shuffle* and the Adult Category winning prize will be an *iPod*.

To apply, please complete the entry form above and submit it along with your photo entry. An entry fee of \$5 per entry is required to offset the winning prize cost.

WHEN AND WHERE TO ENTER: Entries will be accepted starting March 1, 2010 through June 1, 2010. Please submit ONLY ONE ENTRY PER CATEGORY.

You may also mail or hand-deliver your entry along with the application form and waiver as follows: City Manager's Office, City of Santa Rosa, Room 10, Santa Rosa, CA 95404; Attn: Photo Contest. If you mail or hand deliver your entry, please make sure to download your digital photo onto a CD and attach it to your entry and waiver forms.

<http://ci.santa-rosa.ca.us/departments/hr/photocontest/Pages/default.aspx>