

Texas Photographic Society

Cell Phone Photography Contest II

Juror's Statement

Dan Burkholder

What makes a good photograph? What makes a good cell phone photograph? Should the answers be different for these two questions? If not, why have a contest just for cell phones? TPS honors this expanding photographic niche with a competition that attempts to decipher what is special, beautiful and intriguing about images made with our cell phones. Here's what I found.

The images submitted for this contest tell a story about where the medium has been — just look at the abundance of “old photo” effects — and where it's going, with spur-of-the-moment grab shots, a comfortable casualness, and rich textures. There's also what I like to call “the new intimacy” that a small, unassuming cell phone can bring to the image capture table. Look over the selected images and you'll see what I mean.

There is no, one “cell phone look” that I was favoring in this contest. Things like a delightful visual ambiguity, a photo that made the eye linger, a willingness to make the “I have a camera with me!” revelation obvious — these all counted in a big way. Sometimes an image was selected because of the spontaneity, sometimes because the maker used a creative (and appropriate) selection of apps to modify the original capture. And sometimes it was an inviting photo of a dog or cat. As you can see, there isn't a solid formula in cell phone photography any more than there is in generic photography. As Ansel once said, “there are no rules for good photographs; there are only good photographs.”

Thanks to all who entered. Thanks for your eye, your talent, and your sense of exploration. You're the new Lewises and Clarks of the medium.