

“About Photographs for Your Cartouche Submission”

How good should your photos be? Well, how good is your work? The photographs are the only way the committee can evaluate your work. If your work is excellent, then your photos should be of the same quality. Your work will only be seen as good as the quality of the photographs you submit.

You would not submit a piece of work that was poorly finished or had poor quality workmanship. Why would you submit a photo that has poor images and lack of clarity and detail?

You are submitting your application for the highest award that SAPFM has. It is an industry recognized award and it has prestige. The fellow winners are among the best of the best. So you should go to the same effort to get quality photos as you would go to have a great finish or excellent workmanship.

So how to you do this. If you do not understand what is being explained, then find someone who does that can help you. You may have friends, family or even professionals that need to help you and perhaps even take your photos. You may have to pay someone for this. But if your work is that good, why wouldn't you pay for this quality of photograph.

We have seen too many applications that had poor photos. If the size of the file of your photo is less than 2 meg, in all likelihood it is not going to give a good presentation of your work. Your photo should be around 3000 pixels on the long side. A photo of 3000x2000 is going to be 2-4 meg.

What does not work:

- 1) Phone cameras. If you are submitting photos from your phone you are wasting your time and that of the judges.
- 2) Many point and shoot cameras can produce good quality photos if the proper settings are made. Get help and make the necessary settings.
- 3) Good lighting is critical. Flash can create hot spots and wash out details. But using room light can result in grainy photos that lack detail and clarity. The use of photo lamps, back drops and reflective surfaces can greatly enhance your photographs.

What does work:

- 1) Quality equipment – a quality camera can be purchased for under \$300, used ones for under \$150.
- 2) Stable platform – use a tripod. Very inexpensive way to improve your images.
- 3) Lighting – natural lighting and use of reflective surfaces make great photographs. You can use “fill lights” to help improve the overall quality and bring details into the shadow areas.
- 4) Background – try to avoid clutter and other distracting items in the surrounding area. Use a backdrop if possible.
- 5) Review your photographs – look at the images. What do they look like when magnified 200-300%. They should still provide good visual information. Obviously the detail will be a little fuzzy or grainy but it should show your work in detail.

Fine Woodworking has done several articles on photographing your work. Look them up and get some advice. SAPFM mid-year has featured presentations that show how to improve your photographs without spending a great deal of money. There are many resources that can help you.