

# How to Prepare for a National Competition

*“Great things are done by a series of small things brought together” -Vincent Van Gogh*

- **Lately, have you found yourself wondering: “Am I even *ready* to enter a national art show?” As big and scary as that question seems, you can answer that for yourself, just like you would start a painting. It all begins with a willingness to step out of your comfort zone, put on your “strategy hat” and embrace the unknowns.**

# In this Breakout Session:

- We only have an hour: So, here's where we'll build our confidence. Our Panelists will answer questions, and give firsthand knowledge on the finer points, strategies, and considerations when entering art competitions.

# ***Questions for panelists***

- 1. Where do I find out about calls for entry?***
- 2. How do you know if you're ready to enter a particular show***
- 3. What do the jurors look for in these 'next level' competitions?***

*“Every artist was first an amateur.”-Ralph  
Waldo Emerson*

- The following outline captures general steps and considerations; It's a basic structure for artists to make their own, a starting point to build a successful, organized approach to entering shows. Here are some general considerations from our panelists.

# **Panelist Questions:**

- 1. How do I prepare my images?**
- 2. If I get into a show, what about shipping costs and other costs?**
- 3. Is it ok to enter a painting to a national show even though it's been in another show (WSO?) and/or won an award?**

# Set Your Goals:

- How many Shows do I want to enter?
- Consider setting a budget for entering shows.
- Narrow the focus: What kinds of shows do I want to enter?
- KEEP A JOURNAL - There are online sources or use a sketch book. (Know your work and style - i.e. mixed media? Pure watercolor? Paper or Panel?)
- Select which paintings will be entered. -Keep records of paintings entered into shows
- Select and photograph your artwork in preparation for submission.

# **Make a list of Shows and their key information:**

- Entry Deadline & Acceptance Notification
- Juror - Research their backgrounds, their artistic focus, and past jurying experience.
- Prospectus (READ, READ, READ)
- Understand the rules
- Look at last year's winners (if available online)
- Review painting sizes, requirements, framing, the rules matter!
- Show Dates & Location



# Select Which Paintings to Enter:

- *“An Artist is not paid for his labor, but for his vision” –Whistler*
- You can't be selected if you don't enter!
- Remind yourself that everything has already been done before - just not by you.
- Use your critique group to discern which paintings are ready or find another artist whose opinion matters to you.
- You know when you know.
- Be confident in your entry
- **PRESS SUBMIT!!**

# Use Rejection as a Strategic Tool

- How do you deal with rejection?
- Ask hard questions: Do my paintings stand out from the crowd? Is my composition strong? Is my style unique and not a copy of some other artist's style? Judging is subjective and judges will bring their own bias.
- Be crystal clear about your purpose, your vision, and your why behind your work. An artist will build confidence through entering more shows. So **NO** blaming, or negative self-reflection. Show that 'inner voice of self-doubt' the door! You can't be accepted unless you enter! (Didn't we just say that?)

- You will gain more insight and experience the more you enter shows.
- Remember, there is no secret sauce, only dedication of time in the studio, or as they say: Miles under the brush.
- Good Luck!
- Download these pdf versions at WSO website search for “Art Entry Tracking Form” The final exhibition submission for this year is Western Federation 2026 Denver. Opens Dec 12, 2025, closes Feb 11, 2026.