



## Steve Martino - Tips for Design Entries

Having received numerous design awards over the years and having served on several design juries, including a national ASLA jury I have the following guidelines:

1. A good project is not necessarily a large project.  
I received a national ASLA Honor award for the AZT entry - the client only wanted a gate to his farm. As a designer you can sometimes control the DIRECTION your project takes.  
(ex. turning a gate project into several design awards)
2. You need VERY GOOD PHOTOS.  
They should be "magazine ready".
3. The project narrative needs to be clear and include good arguments about the qualities of your project

### other tips

The national ASLA jury looks at over 500 projects. To get by the first cut, your project needs to make a good first impression.

It is expensive entering projects in competitions, so you want to best possible chance of having a good submittal.

Do you think your project is worthy of an award? What is special about it? What ideas are you trying to convey? Is there anything unique that nobody has seen before, anything that is innovative?

Look up the previous years winning projects. Does your project stand up to them? Your project will most likely have to be better than those to win.

The graphics should be geared towards the specific entry rather than just including a sheet from the construction drawings.

#### PHOTOGRAPHS

If it is not specified that only one photo per page is allowed, I will put more than one photo on a page. This creates the first impression and needs to be competitive to make the jurors want to read more.

Photos need to be professional quality and magazine ready - rich colors, good composition and taken in good light.

Photos should tell the story of the project. I sequence them as a walk through of the project to give the jurors a sense of these spaces.

You should wait for 3 years, if plants are small, before photographing.

Before and after photos are good if they fit.

Professional photographers are almost a must on a national level, but you can take them yourself.

If you plan on submitting projects in the future as an ongoing part of your practice I suggest you get some good photo equipment and take photos yourself.

I use my photos to supplement professional photos. I am on the site from the beginning and take progress shots and hundreds of photos before a professional photographer will see the project. You are on the site at different seasons so you have the best opportunity to see the project under different lights and conditions.

The most important element in getting a good photo is the quality of the light. Take photos at sunrise and sunset when the light is soft and the shadows are longest. Shadows show depth and texture.

Take a photography class. Buy or rent equipment. Pros sell used equipment on ebay as they upgrade.

Learn photography tricks, I've learned by looking over the shoulder of many magazine photographers.

A photographer friend said "no sunset - no problem" and he pulled out a gelatin filter that had a graduated rose colored tone on it. He held it up to the lens and that photo has a red tint to the sky only.

When I am selecting slides for a submittal, I put together a library set of at least 10 times the number of slides allowed (for this SHADE presentation, I started with over 200 images) then I eliminate slides I don't think convey something important or are redundant.

If my final cut is still more than the limit I start to group pictures on a page just to get more photos in front of the jurors.

#### NARRATIVE

TALK ABOUT WHAT IS GOOD ABOUT THE PROJECT.

Design is problem solving, identify the problems you solved and how you solved them.

Solving the client's program is the easy part, what other benefits does your project provide? What does the project do for the environment, the local community and the profession?

Describe how the project relates to the context of the site and how the solution fits the context of the site and the region.

Describe your role as the designer. What is the significance of the project to the client, the community and the profession.

Remember, if you don't enter you can't win. Last year for the AZ ASLA award program I pulled out a few projects that I wanted to enter but I was busy and didn't get the submittals put together by the deadline. It turns out the jury did not give out any awards. That's when you should have entered because the competition didn't show up either.