



Seeing is Believing

The art of photography has evolved in leaps and bounds over the last decade, and our contest has evolved along with it; this year, we shifted to an exclusively online submission format. Although any leap forward is accompanied by at least a dash of worry, the results speak for themselves. The heightened ease of participation led photographers to submit 38 percent more photos than last year, and the number of photographers increased by 10 percent. The contest judges also agree that the pool of images was

stronger than usual (and that's saying something).

Residents and visitors to New Mexico often glimpse a typically breathtaking scene—a vista, a sunset—reach for their cameras, and then pause, thinking, “I can’t possibly capture this.” It takes a certain level of pluck and persistence to push past that and go for it. Hundreds of entrants did just that, and a select few were chosen to be showcased in this 12th annual celebration of our state’s beauty, and those who immortalize it.

Grand Prize Winner Harold Hall, Sioux Falls, SD



Harold Hall has a stack of *New Mexico Magazine* Photo Contest issues in his home in South Dakota. He’s saved them to study the images—to get a better sense of what it takes to capture the dramatic landscapes and details of New Mexico—and to feel closer to his original home state.

“I learned that you don’t want the iconic images of the churches,” he says. “Those are the subjects that

are photographed a thousand times a day.”

Over the last six years, Hall has consistently submitted images to our contest. In 2012 he won second place in the “Sense of Place” category, and in 2011 he won an honorable mention in the “Outdoor Scenes” category. Now Hall can call himself the Grand Prize Winner of the 12th annual New Mexico Magazine Photo Contest, for a selection of images he submitted in various categories.

“Winning this is a lifelong dream,” he says.

Our judges selected Hall’s work because his pictures are iconographic with a twist—he dials it in with his Canon 5D3 and offers a new perspective on classic Southwestern shots. “Just looking at the original 1,400 submissions, his rose to the top,” said our Art Director, Fabian West. “He brings a great eye and excellent composition to the table.”

His portfolio is less about grand landscapes and big skies and more about the details, Hall says. “My photos are all

inspired by the unique, little things in New Mexico. Once you start digging around, you find some beautiful stuff.”

Advice he’s got for beginners: “There are technical rules you should follow, but go out and break some of them,” he says. “See what it is that draws you to photography and exploit it.”

Hall, 59, was born in Los Alamos, and though he’s moved around since, his heart remains in the Southwest. “Growing up, I didn’t appreciate everything New Mexico had to offer,” he says. He took the state’s unique light and scenery for granted.

So, 40 years ago, Hall left New Mexico to study finance at the University of Utah, where he first picked up a camera. Post-graduation, he spent 30 years in Chicago working in finance, sometimes six or seven days a week—a time he refers to as his “photography hiatus.”

Hall and his wife, Gayle, retired early and spend their days traveling the U.S. “I’ve been planning my retirement since day one on the job,” he says. “Work was getting in the way of my photography. Now we’re just enjoying life.” On his latest adventure, in Zion National Park, clad in a wet suit and helmet to rappel off a cliff, Hall couldn’t help but smile. “All I could think about were the people I knew in Chicago who were in cubicles answering phones. I thought, ‘Here I am, swimming across Zion National Park.’”

—K. Annabelle Smith

See more of Hall’s work at haroldhallphotography.com.

Aspen Gold

“On the road to the Santa Fe Ski Basin, the first snowfall of the year coincided with the peak color of the aspens.”

