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Judging the ENR Photo Contest: Hows and Whys

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By Tom Sawyer

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One of the perks of being an editor at ENR is that we finish each year with a favorite project: the issue displaying the winners of ENR's annual photo contest.

As we put the final touches on the eleventh contest, editors are still wishing they had more space to write longer pieces about the photos they were assigned. It is the final step in a process that began with more than 1,200 submissions, which were then reviewed by a panel of judges who selected a winners' gallery (see page 26) and a wonderful set of runners-up.

The photos with the highest scores are matched to the editors most likely to find the subjects exciting. Their job is to contact the photographers to make sure the photos meet the contest rules and to hear the stories behind how the images were taken. Almost immediately editors start talking about cool things they have learned about the photographers and projects. The anecdotes start rolling in.

Each year a new panel of judges brings fresh eyes to the selection process. This year's panel included two ENR staffers, Aileen Cho, senior editor for transportation, and Justin Reynolds, associate art director. Our guest judge from a sister publication was Cathleen McGuigan, editor-in-chief of Architectural Record and editorial director of two other McGraw-Hill Construction publications, GreenSource and SNAP (Sweets News and Products).

Two outside judges added photography and construction expertise. Eduardo Angel is a photographer, photography instructor, digital consultant, architect and the owner of [Eduardo Angel Photography LLC](#). Gary DiPaolo, vice president and corporate safety director at Structure Tone Inc., was able to spot good construction photos and add safety expertise to make sure winning photos did not show unsafe practices.

After the judging was finished, DiPaolo saluted the "spirit and intent" of the contest, which he saw as dedicated to "showing the construction process and the people engaged in it," as opposed to "sterile" photos of finished work. He called it a "truly valuable" service to the industry. "I thought some of the photos were absolutely great," he added.

Angel, who teaches at the International Center of Photography in New York City, among other photo-related pursuits, says he came to the judging session expecting to sit down to a pile of "rigid, grid-like, straight-forward images." He says he was "very happily surprised there are so many beautiful images. I wasn't expecting to find fine art."

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