Choosing and preparing images for the annual competition

Please don't let the length of this document deter you from entering the competition. By following these guidelines you can help to make the jobs of the team behind the competition easier and improve your chances of winning an award.

Please check that you have paid your subscription before submitting your entry. Although entry to the competition is free, it is only open to paid-up members of the Society. Subscriptions run from 1st January to 31st December.

Unfortunately, cross-eyed stereo pairs, anaglyph images, phantograms (pop-up 3D images), View-Magic images and stereocards cannot be included in the competition at present.

When considering your entry for the competition, remember that the judges will be looking for imaginative images of high quality which, in their opinion, are enhanced by being stereoscopic.

Mike Hilyard's step-by-step guide to preparing images for the competition with the help of StereoPhoto Maker

Digital Images for the competition should be in ".**JPG format** for Side-by-Side parallel viewing" (full width rather than half width). They can be any aspect ratio and **should not include any black borders**. Each image file should **not exceed 6 Mbytes in size**. How to achieve this using Stereo Photo Maker (SPM) is described step-by-step below:

Work Flow – Start with the image straight from the camera without resizing.

To remove height, rotational and other errors between the left and right images, in SPM, use "Multi Conversion" on the input files (.MPOs or .JPGs, dependent on where they come from) with just "Auto alignment" and "Auto crop after adjustment" boxes ticked. Set the "Auto alignment Settings" to "mount near points to the window if deviation is less than 1/25th image width". Save the resulting images to a suitable new folder. Use Output file type **=.JPG at say 85% quality**.

1. To edit the overall picture, in SPM, use "Open Stereo Image" to view each image in turn to decide what editing is required. This may include cropping, rotation (for those like me who keep holding the camera tilted) and adjustment of the near points to the window (as SPM auto-alignment gets close but is not perfect!)."Easy Adjustment" from the "Adjust" pull down menu offers all of these adjustment types and more, and "Auto Color Adjustment" is good for fixing L/R differences arising with twin camera rigs such as StereoDataMaker (SDM). (Check the result for "artefacts" – spurious image effects, before saving, and be prepared to "undo"!).

2. If you have a 3D monitor such as a Zalman or AOC screen on your computer, use this (with SPM's 3D "Interlaced" mode) to view your images, and don't use the "Easy Adjustment" feature to adjust the near points to the window – simply use the keyboard's left and right arrow keys to get real precision with your window adjustment. When all this is done, switch back to "*Side-by-Side" mode* and use "*SaveStereo Image*" to over-write the image you got from Multi Conversion. These are now your fully corrected images ready for submission. *NB In the 'Save Stereo Image' window of later versions of SPM there is a tick box in the bottom left corner 'Always save SBS format'. Tick this and you don't have to worry about switching between interlaced and side by side before saving.*

3. If, after doing all this, your image file is larger than 6 Mbytes, please use the "*Resize*" function in SPM's "*Edit*" drop down menu to reduce the size. Select the "*Keep Aspect-ratio*" option (middle bullet) in the resize dialogue box.

Other Considerations

When taking images, try to avoid excessive distant point deviation as this causes eyestrain and discomfort when viewing projected images. This usually happens when you get too close to the foreground subject. Apply the simple rule of thumb "keep the closest point included in your image no closer to the camera than 30x the stereo base of your camera", e.g. for a W3, 30 x 74mm = 2.2 metres or 7 ft 3 ins. George Themelis (Dr.T) explains in this blog post how to measure deviation in stereo pairs using StereoPhoto Maker: http://drt3d.blogspot.com/2015/10/how-to-measure-stereoscopic-deviation.html

It is also worth checking the edges of your images for window violations: objects appearing through the window in a way which would be impossible in the real world. Rebecca Sharpe has published a very useful tutorial on the stereo window on the *Stereoscopy Blog*: https://stereoscopy.blog/2020/06/14/the-stereo-window/

If an image looks washed out or lacks contrast, consider making a levels adjustment to improve the impact of the image. This is easily done in Photoshop. You can also make such adjustments with free image viewing and editing programs like Faststone Image Viewer and IrfanView by pressing Ctrl + L.

If an image looks a little soft, consider applying gentle sharpening to it. It is worth enlarging your image to 100% to check for signs that you have overdone it, e.g. halos around edges in your image.

If the horizon appears in an image check that it is level.

If preparing a slide entry, please try to remove all dust from the slides before scanning them and scan them at a resolution of at least 3200 ppi. If you wish to enter slides but have no way of scanning them, email competition@stereoscopicsociety.org.uk to request the postal address to which to send them.

Consider the category in which you enter an image carefully. For example, a record shot of a piece of artwork should go in the human-made objects category rather than the creative/imaginative category. The creative/imaginative category is intended for composite images or those which have been processed by the entrant, e.g. by the application of a filter, post-capture to portray an "altered reality". An image may be transferred to another section, if the competition secretary feels that it would be more appropriate there. Portraits of people, pets and domestic animals should be of living subjects not sculptures

All the images converted from 2D to 3D whatever the subject and however the original image was converted will be judged together on the quality of the conversion.

With the exception of entries for the Images on a Theme category, if you have more than one image of a subject, it is better to decide for yourself which one to enter rather than to enter several similar images and expect the judges to choose the best one for you.

Please choose concise names for your image files which match the titles appearing on your entry form as closely as possible and include a number in the file name for images in a set for the Images on a Theme category to make clear the order in which you wish the images to be viewed.

If the total size of your entry exceeds the maximum attachment size allowed by your email service provider, attach the files to a series of emails to the competition email address (number these, 1 of 4, for example, to help make it clear how many messages the competition secretary should expect). Alternatively, you could send the files in a bundle via a free big email service such as MailBigFile, WeTransfer or SwissTransfer.

Please don't forget to complete an entry form and send it as an attachment (preferably in Word format or PDF rather than .jpg) to a message to the competition email address or include it in the bundle containing your image files, if you are sending them via one of the services mentioned above.

Rob Caley
Competition secretary, November 2026