LET'S PRACTICE

February Will Be Abstract Month

Our special topic in February will be abstracts. For a definition:

ab·stract
1. thought of apart from concrete realities, specific objects, or actual instances: an abstract idea.
2. expressing a quality or characteristic apart from any specific object or instance, as justice, poverty, and speed.
3. theoretical; not applied or practical: abstract science.
4. difficult to understand; abstruse: abstract speculations.
5. Fine Arts .
   a. of or pertaining to the formal aspect of art, emphasizing lines, colors, generalized or geometrical forms, etc., especially with reference to their relationship to one another.
   b. (often initial capital letter) pertaining to the non-representational art styles of the 20th century.

So pretty much anything goes. It's a separation from reality. While you can call the extreme macro shots an abstract, I would prefer, for this month, that you so something along the lines of these examples. We will do those close-ups later this year.
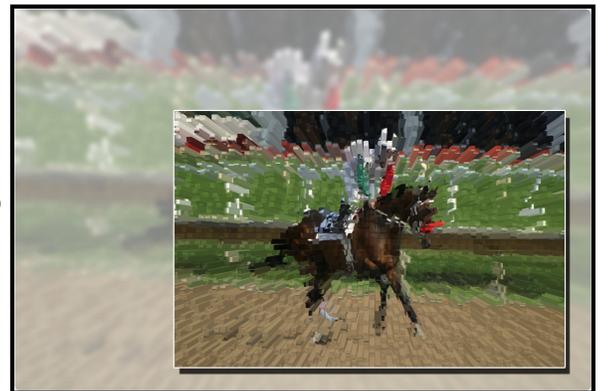
You can create abstracts from various filters in Photoshop such as Glowing Edges, Radial Blur, Polar Coordinates and others.

Have fun—and Let's Practice.
Marti

Stroke

I keep harping about using a stroke on your images—especially if you are planning to compete at the local club level or internationally with PSA.

So what is a stroke? A stroke is a small line, sort of like a frame, that sets your image off from the background (usually black). If you have dark edges on your image, they will blend right in with the screen and the image loses some impact (and points). The stroke defines the borders of the image.

On page one, you see my images set off from the white background with a black stroke. This doesn't mean a frame effect—though you can stroke big enough to make a frame. All you want is that little bit of difference between the black (or white) background and the image itself. If the stroke gets too large, it detracts from the image.

How do I get a stroke on my image, you ask? First, if you are in any other layer but the background layer, it's easy. Just go to the Edit tab and find the Stroke command. Click on it and a window will come up allowing you to choose the stroke's color and size. I usually use a 1-2 pixel stroke. Keep it rather small.

So:
1) Size your image before stroking it
2) Go to the Edit tab
3) Choose Stroke
4) Choose a color (it does not have to be white or black—whatever color complements your image (there is the eyedropper present to pick pixels from your image if you so desire)
5) Choose a size—usually one or two pixels. Go small and if it doesn't look good to you, add a pixel.
6) Choose OK and the stroke should show up.
7) If the stroke doesn't show up, increase the size by about 2 pixels until it does show up.

NOTE: You cannot use stroke on a background layer unless you first "Select All" or CTRL A.
If you have sized and flattened your image for competition or web viewing, this would be the command to use first. If you don't, Stroke will be grayed out and unusable.

I think you will find your images have more "punch" and will do better in competition if you use the stroke.