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MAKE YOUR OWN RULES

The #skinny on hair competitions BY JILLIAN MITCHELL

Like many stylists before her, Angie Hunt has admittedly been bitten by the competition bug – and she has no plans to kick it anytime soon.

“Win or lose, it is always about personal growth, pushing yourself out of your comfort zone and being a risk taker,” says Hunt, who boasts many

wins over her 17-year career, including Chatters/Redken’s National Stylist Choice Award.

Admittedly, her favourite part of the competition process is adding to her photo entry portfolio, each image created through the use of an inspirational story board/mood mural: hair, buildings, painting, shapes, and

shades of colour – anything, really.

Hunt, who currently works at Winnipeg’s Chatters on Empress, has had much success in the world of photo competition, which she attributes to her objective approach and carefully executed six-step plan: build a winning team (great model, photographer), barter services, test strands, take test



Never content to be considered a cookie-cutter stylist, Hunt is an advocate of making her own rules – looking at what’s new (or new again) and giving it a modern twist. “Put your own personal twist on it. This will help you realize your vision,” she adds, citing that a trend will last up to six years: two years coming in, two years “in” and two years on the way out.

As a final thought, Hunt, who plans to be in attendance at the Redken 5th Avenue New York Exchange, stresses the integral correlation between professional development and competition wins. “The continual education and support from my salon has encouraged the most growth in my career,” she admits.

Élan Hair Studio’s Renn Van Dyck is another fierce competitor in the world of hair – and so are many of his stylists. Van Dyck, who opened his salon in 2005, says his involvement in competitions proved to be a great personal and business investment.

“[Competition involvement] was a natural thing to help promote the salon and it also fires up the staff and gets them involved,” says the 2014 Contessa

Manitoba-Saskatchewan Stylist of the Year, who holds many accolades in the live and photography competition realms.

According to Van Dyck, the winning-entry recipe is two-fold: a little bit of luck and a great team (great hair, models and photographer). “You don’t necessarily have to follow the trends; being aware of the trends is good,” says the stylist of 25 years.

“Trying to be creative in your own vein is good. Trying to do knockoffs of the trends is usually not the best way to go.”

When it comes to preparing competition entries, Van Dyck is a strong advocate of research (i.e. garnering inspiration and sizing up competition). As he says, winning entries show competency. Additionally, Van Dyck advises entrants to decide their motivation for entering early on. (Is it in good fun or for the win?)

“Both reasons are good as long as you do it. Just don’t put too much pressure on yourself right away and get some experience under your belt first,” he says. “Ultimately whether you win or not, you should be happy with what you’ve

done. The trophies are great – the icing on the cake – but when you look at your body of work, that has something to say.”

According to Van Dyck, the world of competition requires a stick-to-itiveness. “You have to look at it as a journey. You have to be determined,” he says. “I’ve competed a lot and if I gave up every time I ‘failed’, then I wouldn’t have won as much as I have.” ■



Angie Hunt and her many trophies and awards



Élan Hair Studio’s stylists are multiple award winners at various shows across North America.

shots, converse with mentors, and use Photoshop sparingly.

“Train your eyes to spot over-saturated photos,” she advises budding stylists who are ready to dip their toe in the competition pond. “Keep the focal point on the hair; no over-the-top makeup and wardrobe. Retouch skin and background only.”