

Criteria for Judging Art Exhibits
Neill Slaughter
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Given this extraordinary continuation of coping with the pandemic, I realize many of the adult artists and even the high school students are probably having to work at home and or sporadically attending classes in school. In any case it is one more complication that must be faced as we all contend with this unprecedented pandemic for this year's **BAYSIDE HISTORICAL SOCIETY** annual juried exhibit, which again as last year is being judged online instead of in person. Having reviewed all the artwork with my colleague and co-juror Robert Mehling, we are cognizant of what is entailed in the creative endeavors we saw presented in this year's online exhibition and want to compliment everyone's efforts from the artists to Laura James and her competent staff who rose to the challenge admirably, allowing this exhibit to occur, considering these trying circumstances of not being able to view the exhibit in real life, but instead online.

There are certain judging criteria, which I would like to share with those artists who are participating in this particular exhibit. As a practicing artist and professor for a full four decades, I feel strongly that creating art is intrinsically linked to interpretation. All visual artists become inspired by something, which is generally motivated by visual stimuli, and then interpreted as well as communicated visually. Regardless of the medium or whether the art is abstract or representational realist in its approach, I try to be as objective as possible while judging an exhibition. Certainly, I value skill and technique, however, ultimately, I look for an honesty and truth in the artwork. During a careful analysis, in the best art there is a transcendence, whereby the viewer is emotionally moved or taken to another place by the artist's interpretation. I think it is important that the artist's intention is communicated as well. If we as viewers sense or recognize an inconsistency in intent or approach then the work suffers. Sometimes the artist's idea is better than the execution because of lack of skill or technique. Other times the skill is visually apparent, but there is no transcendence beyond merely copying a photograph or even photographing something that doesn't transcend the obvious, while still other times the end result is cliché or mimics other artists and there is nothing original in the interpretation. Recognizing that in this particular exhibition there are artists with more years of practice and or education than others, nevertheless certain artworks stand out over others and therefore are singled out, worthy of recognition in a variety of categories ranging from drawing, painting (acrylic and oil), watercolor, mixed media, photography and a new category digital art, whereby the art is done completely within the computer. In each category one artist has been judged the BEST and if warranted other artists received HONORABLE MENTION. In addition to judging adults artwork this year, there were students from Bayside High School whose art was presented in a separate category not associated with the juried adult artists. And while there are no awards for the high school art, some of these students were so competent that their art warrants recognition as being considered in a category I call "Ones to Watch".

PAINTING (oil and acrylic)

Geoffrey Atkin, BEST PAINTING AWARD

Both of this artist's paintings present compelling conceptual ideas and both paintings exhibit a masterful handling of not only the painting medium, but also evocative color and strategic composition, thoughtfully conceived to captivate the viewer. In the "**Bell Consignment**" painting the vertical format emphasizes the dramatic purple blue sky overhead in which there is a full moon near the top of the canvas. One's eye moves down through the expressionist handling of this theatrically moody sky of clouds and setting sun in a sort of zig zag manner to the shop window filled with an array of well rendered objects, including a light globe approximately the same size and value as the moon at the top of the composition. This painting is well planned and executed. The same can be said about the horizontal composition in his other painting called "**Oakland Lake Dream**". At a quick glance it appears to be a long horizontal lakefront composition with foliage both in the foreground and running along the opposite shore up to a building. However, if one stares at the scene a bit longer it becomes more Surrealistic, as there are two ghost like figures on the left side, subtly camouflaged by the foliage color, embracing in a kiss somewhat reminiscent of that pose in Rodin's famous statue "The Kiss". Additionally, just below and to the right in the foreground water is another apparition subtly suggesting a face, reminding this viewer of Ophelia in the famous Pre-Raphaelite painting by John Everett Millais. As the name of the painting would imply there is indeed a "dreamlike" quality transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary!

Ellen Katcher, "Blue Woman" (Honorable Mention)

This portrait of an African American female wearing jewels and a blue coat is very competently painted. There is a confidence in the bravura brushwork describing plane changes within the face to the handling of the jewels in her hair and blue patterned jacket that is somewhat reminiscent of Robert Henri and other brash, bold American artists of the early 20th century.

Jamie Zaragoza, "Cherry Blossoms" (Honorable Mention)

There is a wild exuberant freedom of expression in this particular painting that would almost fit the Abstract Expressionism category, except that there is still a resemblance to a cherry tree, including a trunk and the explosive marbling patterns of paint swirling out from the brown base. The manner in which this painting was created is akin to controlled chaos, but there is nevertheless a strategic handling of the paint to not lose the basic tree structure, although certainly to push the boundary of representationalism all the way to the ninth degree.

Carmen Mosca, "We" (Honorable Mention)

Both of this artist's paintings are quite interesting and rather unique. Both are abstract in conception, but in both representational images appear within the abstraction, something like seeing a recognizable image in a cloud floating overhead. For instance, within "**In Groove**" several female images wearing long white gowns vaguely appear, although to the left and considerably larger an amorphous shape resembles a bumble or honey bee's body. In "**We**" there is a silhouette face on the left and out of what could be the base of the neck an explosion of blackness

branches out across the canvas. One could interpret this as a “tree of life” or the dark fissures within a brain. However one chooses to interpret these cathartic passages of dark and light, warm and cool color and impasto maneuvers throughout the composition depends upon the mind’s eye.

Stacy Carner, “Garden of Eden” (Honorable Mention)

This is a painting in which the manipulation of paint on canvas has an obsessive-compulsive quality, which moves beyond the ordinary into another realm. There is an exploratory feeling whereby the paint oozes while pushing through in and around creating a wide array of textural shapes plus a plethora of different colors forming an organic matter, appearing much larger than on a 20x16” canvas. It suggests something other worldly, almost like a verdant landscape seen from above as if it is from the view point of GOD eyeing his Garden of Eden still being created.

Stephen Klein, “Blizzard Memory” (Honorable Mention)

The title suggests this painting was done from memory. While it reads as a fairly conventional Impressionistic painting of a snow scene in winter, there is a contradiction between the word “blizzard” and what is portrayed, snow with blue shadows indicating sunlight falling on the snow...following a blizzard. Nevertheless, there is an energetic urgency to how the paint is applied; trying to quickly recall the blizzard before his memory fades. There is something genuinely reassuring about the attitude of this artist, whom I don’t think spent time copying a photograph taken during the blizzard, but instead is trying to recall his memory of what he witnessed, which to some degree is suggested in the negative space between the tree branches as a turbulent stormy sky juxtaposed to the sun-drenched snowy landscape in the foreground. There is a strange truth between the contradictions of the painting’s title and what is portrayed.

WATERCOLOR

Elizabeth Sheehan “Remember the Red Birds” BEST WATERCOLOR AWARD

Although both of this artist’s watercolors convey a convincing sense of atmosphere, this particular painting the jurors felt was a bit stronger in terms of believable perspective with the handling of the subway train, whereas the bridge in “**Snow Shower**” rising up over the viewer appears to twist in an awkward manner that we don’t believe was intended. In “**Remember the Red Birds**” the handling of the paint and palette, particularly between the solid drawing within the tracks in the foreground, moving back to the subway cars, then to the city create an atmosphere. That atmosphere coupled with the title of the painting all combine to create a certain nostalgia for those older subway cars, of what I think is the 7 train, which seem to be fading away as they move towards the hazy dreamlike distant cityscape.

Kerry McKay “Ship Bottom, Long Beach Island” (Honorable Mention)

The fresh spontaneous handling of the watercolor describing the foreground shoreline running up to the retaining walls on either side of the inlet, on towards the distant dwellings coupled with the loose wet into wet wash in the sky all combine to create a harmonious atmosphere in this straightforward watercolor painted from life. There is an urgency which occurs when working on location that provides a life force to the painting and that is really apparent in this watercolor.

Watercolor continued

Patricia Klein, "Pine Tree" (Honorable Mention)

There is a traditional Oriental aesthetic at work in this watercolor, which is handled well by the artist painting this highly stylized pine tree. Important aspects of disciplined design have thoughtfully been considered including compositional placement of the tree off center and sweeping to the right with the tips of the branches, just about touching the top right and lower right side of the page, are counterbalanced on the left with approximately the same amount of space between the tree trunk and format edge. There is also a disciplined and highly calculated handling of value from dark to light within the wet-on-wet treatment within the tree trunk and spiked foliage at the tip of the branches. Everything is in control and highly stylized including the very subtle value within the negative space surrounding the tree yet looks so fresh and simplified.

MIXED MEDIA

Giovanni Gelardi, "Our Milky Way Galaxy" BEST MIXED MEDIA AWARD

This provocative mixed media piece, which includes 3-D objects is thoughtfully constructed, paying attention to little details that only enhance its narrative, which appears to suggest ideas of deep personal concern for the environment, politics, religion, science, as well as some history that can and should inform society's future. The various toy objects in each of the little shadow boxes are used as symbols for the viewer to ponder the many conceptual ideas as noted above that fill our greater "galaxy".

Barbara Vinitz, "A New Dawn" (Honorable Mention)

There is a strong dynamic composition in this mixed media monoprint with a collage overlay. The artist says she's a "novice", however there is a certain sophistication to how she has interwoven the freeform vibrant colors with that darker (and in some cases lighter) knitted object appearing somewhat like a template, adding a certain structural element to counterbalance the freeform abstraction. The various shapes within the composition appears quite spatial making it look like it could be a much larger piece, 8x10 feet instead of the 8x10 inches.

Christina Vandian, "Symbiotic 1 & 2" (Honorable Mention)

Even though there is no artist statement to explain what has motivated these two mixed media images, it would appear that in both pieces, which the jurors believe make a stronger statement seen as a diptych, the figurative elements tucked into fetal positions surrounded by a series of what could be symbolically interpreted as sperm and eggs, lining the border, would suggest a feminist commentary of some kind. Regardless, the images are evocative of something universal and sensitively created with all sorts of subtle texture and shifts in color. With a discerning eye, one can see a little drawing or collage of tiny mushrooms, which the viewer can ponder as to the symbiotic relationship between the figures and these tiny fungi. After all symbiosis involves interaction between two different organisms living in close physical association.

DRAWING

Sharon Whinston, “Rise” BEST DRAWING AWARD

There were very few drawings submitted this year, however this particular pen and ink line drawing of a bird stood out from the other drawings because it is so confidently rendered in ink, a medium that is not forgiving. Aptly titled there is a sense of action as the bird “rises” into flight. Upon close inspection there is an economic yet effective handling of hatching and line quality.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Willy Airaldi, “Lucky Ladybug” BEST PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD

The subtlety of this minimalist photo of a ladybug on a cracked wall is astonishingly simple yet so effective as a photo in part because it actually transcends what one thinks of as a normal photo. The viewer is pulled in immediately to inspect the patterns of the cracked wall juxtaposed to the ladybug. The artist has found and exploited the concept of abstraction found in reality.

Susan Abruzzo, “Red Cardinal in Winter Snow” (Honorable Mention)

While this photo is more traditional in terms of composition, running along a snow path under an archway of winter trees laced in snow, what makes this particular photo stand out is that except for the red cardinal sitting in the tree in the upper right foreground, this could essentially be a B&W photo. That small element in the overall composition is crucial to its success as a photo.

Tim Peters, “Sunken Dredge” (Honorable Mention)

This photo of an old sunken dredge may have attracted the artist for its antique aesthetic appeal, however the importance of this photo has more to do with making a social commentary concerned with obsolescence and decay. Time has stood still yet society has moved on and what was once probably profitable is now no longer and not even worth the expense to move the dredge from this place of abandonment.

Thomas Surprenant, “Kissena Park – Lake Lady” (Honorable Mention)

While the vast majority of the art in this year’s exhibit is somewhat “escapist” in nature and not acknowledging the pandemic, the series of photos comprising this photo poster of multiple images all confront the pandemic! The artist carefully organized these ladies, all wearing hats and all reading or looking at their cell phones while sitting outside in Kissena Park. Each is portrayed as an individual yet each is part of a larger group and all are in their own way escaping Covid! It’s a social commentary of how to cope with the here and now of unusual and very unsettling times.

Terri Will, “Trees in Winter” (Honorable Mention)

Some viewers might not initially see the poetry in this quiet and arresting photograph with such subtlety in all aspects, beginning with the composition. Strategically shooting from a particular vantage point of presenting the stand of trees to emphasize the gentle arch is not an accident.

The subtle shift in values from dark to light and clarity of light falling across the scene is not wholly unlike an Ansel Adams photograph.

DIGITAL

EI, “Solipsism” BEST DIGITAL ART AWARD

For the uninitiated Solipsism means the view or theory that the self is all that can be known to exist and as the artist further explains, it is the absorption with oneself without consideration for the needs and desire of others. When viewing the image of the female figure with the word Solipsism in red letters placed over the eyes, coupled by an overlay of wavy American “stars and bars” it would certainly seem that there is some sort of social commentary of a political nature being portrayed. If it were former President Trump, the message would be abundantly clear. This female however, looks something like Jennifer Lopez, although that is simply speculation and this juror is not sure if that is correct. Regardless of whoever it is this digital art piece is well constructed and thought provoking.

Sharon Whinston, “Black Kite” (Honorable Mention)

Despite having already been recognized for her bold confident drawing ability in “Rise” this artist is very adept at creating a digital painting within the computer as is evident from the image of the Black Kite bird. All aspects work equally well from the perspective and proportion of the bird to subtle shifts in color and value within the kite as well as the gentle modulation from warm to cool in the negative space. It’s a professional looking illustration of a Black Kite, pure and simple!

Bayside High School Art Students

In addition to the adult juried exhibition hosted by the Bayside Historical Society there is another component added, which is certainly worth seeing, a number of talented high school art students. And although these students’ art will not be juried with awards, there are a number of students whose excellent work should be recognized. These students are going to make their mark in the near future. For the time being they will simply be referred to as **ONES TO WATCH!**

ONES TO WATCH

Elena and her sophisticated digitally created view of a **futuristic NYC**, utilizing a personal palette portraying imaginative buildings with a transparent bubble boat on the river between buildings.

Jessica, “Covid Snow” portrays a sensitively rendered masked face on the far left juxtaposed by an array of snow-covered branches that diagonally cut through the composition from left to right.

Maria, “Little Owl” a drawing with strong graphic impact, from the intensely staring eyes to the fluffy feathers.

Lucia, "Train Ride" an excellent example of one point perspective in this digital animated subway car.

Natalie, "A Goodbye" presents the viewer with a psychologically charged image of a female with a fatalistic hypnotic stare, partially submerged in water with a little floating paper origami boat floating away. The rendering of the eyes, boat and reflection are sophisticated beyond her years. The artist perhaps found inspiration in "Ophelia" by the Pre-Raphaelite artist John Everett Millais.

Nicole, "Self-Portrait" this drawing exhibits a strong graphic impact due to the full range of values and the amount of detail, not just in the head, but surrounding it complements the dynamic close-cropped composition.

Ruier, "Black Lives Matter" a well rendered drawing of a dignified African American staring off into the distance juxtaposed by diagonal bands running through the negative space labeled BLM.

Shayera "Unnatural Beauty" wonderfully imaginative digital rendering of a room with a blowing curtain counterbalanced by a still life of a bowl filled with geometric objects captivatingly colored with very subtle shifts of warm and cool tones influenced by the reflective surfaces.

Yufei, "Surreal" Aptly titled this very imaginative pencil drawing of room featuring an array of representational objects that normally would not exist together, but when orchestrated as they are here creates a very Surreal scene indeed!

Yuki, "Moving On" a very cleverly conceived cartoon comprised of brightly colored collaged images in a very trendy or "hip" configuration as if it were a fashion statement advertising the "New Me" girl moving on!