

Fredericksburg Fine Arts Show - 2022

Juror's Statement

I'd like to first say thank you to the Woman's Club of Fredericksburg and Fredericksburg Parks, Recreation and Events, for inviting me to Judge the 71st annual Fredericksburg Fine Arts Show and Sale.

I was truly honored to be asked for a second year in a row. The breadth of skill and dedication displayed among the works was impressive, and certainly made the selection process a challenge. By my rough count, over 260 artworks are here today. This is a true testament to the vibrant artist community in the Fredericksburg area.

The first thing I do as a juror, is an initial walk-through of the entire exhibit – done quickly- then repeated – slowly. Being able to stand, face-to-face with the work is important to me; to feel it's presence, and understand the air it takes up in the room.

The first time through is all about getting a feeling from the show, more specifically, what pieces speak to me – and looking for the Best in Show – that one piece that stands out above the rest in speaking to me, giving me something, taking me somewhere...it has to be a 'wow'. The second time through, the works must stand up to the scrutiny according to my artistic criteria. Many, many more walk-throughs are done in looking for and giving out all of the other awards which are judged accordingly in each category.

My first reactions are instinctive. I respond to works that surprise and interest me and hold my attention. I want to see the artist's intent and that it has been realized. I want to be told a story, whether through clear narrative or experimentation of media. It is also important to me that the work transcend the medium. I ask of the work – "Is this as far as you can take it?"

The academically-inclined-artist in me (which often feels like an oxymoron!) scrutinizes craftsmanship, technical skill, clean presentation and creativity. But I also look for those diamonds in the rough that throw out the rule-book and dare to be bold.

I consider the use of color, how the light is captured, composition, subject matter and medium. I ask myself, (Sometimes over and over) Does it express a mood or message? Has the artist pushed boundaries, broken rules, taken risks? Does it invite me to explore it closely by appearing intimate or does it dominate my space with overwhelming expression?

The artwork chosen for the following awards in each category combined both craftsmanship and content to produce what I consider, a resolved work of art. Please remember that I am by no means, the final judgement on the quality of your work. I am simply and briefly stating why I considered these works successful and how my personal aesthetic concerns are realized in each piece.

With that in mind, it was my job to assign awards. So, I'd like to say just a few words about each awardee. For purposes of shortening the length of this statement and not keeping you all here for hours,

I have used last names and title of works only and tried to keep my comments to one to two sentences a piece.

Let's begin with **3D Sculpture**. I awarded artist Washington's artwork entitled *Happy Birthday* first place because of its dominating presence, its ability to merge the whimsical and comical with functionality, and its engaging, sculptural form in the round. In second place was Spratt's work titled, *Wooden you like it*, for its intimate and quiet presence and pun-like sarcasm. It reminds me greatly of the often-comical ceramic artwork of Jack Earl. In third place Andrew's *Pierce the sky*, for beautiful manipulation of the material, the ability to make the hardness of metal seem soft and giving and because I can see the artist's hand involved in the making of the object. I also gave Honorable Mention to Lush-Rodriguez's *White Poppy*. The clay artist in me recognizes the skill shown in this work. The work exemplifies elegant media-manipulation and subtle experimentation with finish.

In the category of **Oil**, I awarded first place to Toves's *Lady Latte (in the style of John Singer Sargent)* because this work embodies, the space where classical meets contemporary and there is a story being told through the attitude and look of the model. For second place, Thompson's *The Mayhurst Inn* is impeccably detailed while maintaining a hint of impressionism. For third place, Drilling's *Everything is too Much* for its raw emotion. I can feel and see the artist's hand at work in this piece. For Honorable Mention I awarded Mirmanova's *Shadow* because I feel like as a viewer, I am being granted access to this moment of mystery – a glance and secretive view into a contemplative instant in the model's mind.

For the category of **Novice**, I found my Best in Show work with Thornton's *Goolricks After Hours*. I really had to question why this work was categorized as Novice because the artist's aptitude for the media and their understanding of composition, perspective, light, and color is quite notable. I choose this for Best in Show because I feel like it is a work of art that embodies the true history of our little town, exudes a quiet "after-hours-when-the-world-has-gone-to-sleep" emotion, is skillfully crafted and tells a clear story.

I awarded first place to Landauer's *Time Out* because narrative is easily found but still maintains a sense of mystery and the mastery of the media by this artist is far from what I would call novice. In second place I awarded Morrison's *Heartful* because this work stands out so boldly from most of the work in this show. I am transported to the beautiful, graphic-world of Frida Khalo's self-portraits with bleeding hearts with its nod to Mexican aesthetic ideas. In third place is LaRue's *After the Storm* for its quiet view of the color spectrum that nature provides after a seemingly heavy downpour.

For the category of **Acrylic**, I awarded first place to Perkin's *Blue Boys*, because I feel a warmth radiating from the center of a densely painted composition that is unassuming, entices me to look closer and be rewarded with the mastery of skill found in the work. Coming in second was Roberson's *Lost in the Blue*, because I feel like I'm looking at a watery reflection, on a rain-drenched street, where the light and sound of a busy city bustles around me. I can hear this artwork. In third was Richard's *Abstract Red Floral*, for dense, rich, red color that to me is the most emotion-driven color in the spectrum. Making the work more impactful is the impressionistic style in which the subject matter is presented. And for Honorable Mention I awarded Cooper's *Rainbow Delight* because this rather small-scale work packs a

hell of a punch with color. Its representation is full spectrum and subtle light nuances help propel me deeper into the composition.

For the category of **Drawing**, first place was awarded to Klinbeil's *Sharp Shooter* because of the skill the artist has shown, the attention to details and texture and how to use the media to render that texture so acutely and because I feel a sense of content coming from the model's stare. Coming in second place was Wigglesworth's *Moon on Lake* for the subtle control of tone and value and how even minimal, nearly monochromatic, compositions can reflect a moment of quiet nature. In third was Rickard's *Eastern Box Turtle* for its very anatomical and scientific approach to this species. I'm transported to a time in my life where I decided I wanted to be a medical illustrator- before the invention of photoshop and digital manipulation! It embodies the science of the species and all of its details that bring it into being. And for Honorable Mention, Christy's *Pileated Woodpecker* because there is this air of sophistication and maybe contempt this little character exudes, which is made stronger with how the artist is able to manipulate the material to their liking.

In **Mixed Media**, I awarded first place to Hode's *Reconciliation* because I can see the artist in their studio softly layering piece upon piece of material, considering translucency, density, color, and texture as if they were an interior designer choosing the best palette. In second place, Powel's *Black, White and Red* where the precious, historical fragility of the object is made strong and demands respect and adoration. In third place, I awarded Moore's *Inside a Dream* where the saturated pops of color, layering and perspective transport me to a graphic novel brought to life. For Honorable Mention, *Washington's Time to Call* because I'm intrigued by the story being told here. I need to know what that time signifies. This sentimental, nostalgic object and title is giving me directions I want to follow!

In the category of **Watercolor**, I awarded first place to Veil's *Sunday at Noon* because to me, this unassuming work embodies the translucency of watercolor and is reminiscent of a children's storybook illustration evoking memories of story-time as a child. In second place, Castellano-King's *White Peony* is bold and rich with color yet soft and showcases the depth one can achieve through this media. For third place, Parmelee's *Strolling Downtown Fredericksburg* transported me to a moment we've perchance all have experienced – a stroll through the streets of our hometown. The work is rendered in such a way that I feel as if it's a moving picture, coming to life, before my eyes as layers beget layers. And Honorable Mention goes to Meredith's *Seaside* because I feel like I can hear the waves splashing against the rocks and the subtle hiss of the sea spray as it jumps off the rocky surface.

And now onto **Photography**. Nearly anyone with a smart-phone can take a picture, download the newest app and spend hours in post-production manipulating the image until its original moment is nearly lost.

But not just anyone can cease a moment in time and maintain it's rich, human, substance. Photographers have a hard job these days. Their duty is to make the common seem special, the passed over to hold importance, and make people stop, think, feel and reflect using a tool that millions of people take for granted day after day – The Camera.

For first place, Chitum's *Little Big Girl*, made me stop and consider this story. A perhaps everyday occurrence (walking your beloved animal on a beach) became a special moment of bonding and care as I delve deeper into the work and noticed the footprints of human and animal together imprinted in the sand. Being a dog-lover, and owner of a senior dog, this moment stuck with me hard.

I can hear the conversation taking place in Fahrney's *Ken's Barber Shop*, in second place. There is a sense of down-home living, comradery and banter. In third place, ODonnell's *Frozen* brought chills to my senses as I contemplated the connection of photography freezing a moment in time, while catching that frozen object in space. The contrast of texture is also something to note. And for Honorable Mention, Stout's *Milky Way* reminds me of just how small us humans really are.

It's a lifelong challenge and joy to be on this creative journey. There is a myriad of ways in which to grow as artists, but one of the neatest ways is to critique the work of others. We feel more objective when critiquing another's work...it's harder to do when it's our own. Make it your growth agenda to never dismiss another artist's work, be it a friends or work in a gallery or a museum. Try to understand what they were after and how they achieved it...or how they could have achieved it better according to what you think their goal was for that work of art. In doing so, in approaching works of art in this manner, you will reap the rewards of growth in your own work. And that's what it's all about...the process of growth and understanding. Awards are nice, but they don't define our process....and if you didn't receive one, know that you are with all of us in the challenge of growing our art.

Debra Balestreri