

Midwest Museum of American Art

41st Elkhart Juried Regional

October 5 – December 21, 2019

2019 STATISTICS:

Artists Entering 227

Artists Accepted 121

Works Entered 389

Works Accepted 147

JURORS STATEMENTS

The submissions for the 41st Elkhart Juried Regional Exhibition presented an abundance of visual diversity. There were many strong works of art. Choosing the accepted pieces and the prizewinners was a challenge. What struck me the most was the level of skill and technical ability in the entries. Many accomplished artists entered the competition. The level of artistic ability precipitated the next criteria for choosing art for the exhibition. The works had to have another layer and this layer being the voice and message of the artist. Does the work address a certain issue, express a thought or idea or does it leave the viewer questioning the meaning? Has the artist taken risks or tried something different? Does the piece resonate in some way with me and initiate further exploration? Is the style distinctly their own? Do I have the desire to see more work by this artist?

The work of award-winning artists as well as other artists such as Bonnie Rock, David Baker, Johnny Thompson, and Sibyl Graber Gerig stood out with their handling of medium, technique and subject matter. Their work demonstrated (to me) the quality and strength of art in the region.

My appreciation is given to Brian Byrn for inviting me to select the works and awards for this exhibition. Viewing the actual work rather than digital images was very valuable. Being able to see the art up close and to discover the nuances and details was an important part of the selection process. I would like to acknowledge and congratulate all the artists admitted to this exhibition. I would also like to encourage the artists who were not included to continue to develop their unique vision in their work, to exhibit and to enter more competitions.

Denise Lisiecki

Director

Kirk Newman Art School

Kalamazoo Institute of Arts

I must share a confession on “the role of a juror”; the process of choosing or evaluating artwork is biased. A remark from a great photographer best describes my feelings:

The only thing for an artist to remember is that he or she is the only one fully entitled to judge the work. The artist who makes the work is the one who will spend the most time looking and ultimately understanding the content of the work. - Ralph Gibson

I acknowledge those courageous enough to expose their work to a broader public as valid in pursuit, because I believe that image and idea makers create voice and sustain a cultural history. Each of you are making thoughtful, healthy, valuable and diverse contributions to your community. A juried show is one of many validating avenues in the art world.

Difficult choices had to be made, even though, I wished deeply that the galleries were large enough to fit all that applied. My selection process mimicked my personal expectations in creating my own works of art: well-crafted (the artist must be in control of his/her medium), professionally presented, with intentionally developed ideology and unique vision. I offer a small bit of advice concerning the presentation of artwork; framing, matting or otherwise should be invisible. In other words, avoid using presentation as embellishment or decoration. Overbearing statements of presentation may demean artworks or lead the eye away from the “jewel”. Trust that your artwork can stand alone with minimal, clean finishes. Observe presentation methods in institutions and museums of art; they set time trusted standards.

It was both inspiring and pleasurable to study, interpret and spend time with your work. This exhibit represents variety of styles and messages. It is rich in medium and range of expression. The awarded prizes are to works that truly fit my personal code of aesthetic criteria. Submissions were notably strong in the mixed media areas blurring lines between traditional approaches. I was especially drawn to Mary Burke’s quiet work *Pears*, Kaylee Dalton’s technical drawing and collages of *Dawn and High Noon* (a diptych), Deborah Miller’s nostalgically domestic work of *Apron Strings*, Gloria Reinke’s vibrant ceramic painting *Fire Flower* and John Peterink’s curious sculptural instrument (that I wished to hear). Also, mentionable favorites were Bonnie Rock’s mixed media iconographic collages, Carol Meyer’s misty layered digital collage, Judy Wenig-Horswell’s quirky *Poppy Bugs in an Indiana Jungle* and the subtly of Sibyl Graber Gerig’s miniature fiber collage *Rising Mist*. It is obvious that there is a vibrant culture of art making in this region.

Finally, as a fellow practicing artist, I offer encouragement. Continue your pursuits and passions in life, fearlessly. Seize all exhibition opportunities, so that you may practice the role of a professional. Strive to share your work with an audience, so that you may you learn more about your responsibilities as an artist. Persist in educating yourself, so that your role of an artist evolves. Be a faithful participator of your local community, art by nature is about communicating ideas, your voice is valuable and can’t be heard in a vacuum.

Thank you for sharing your work and for inviting me to be a part of your community. Congratulations to the award winners for being special in this juror's eyes. Thank you to Curator and Director Brian Byrn and the Midwest Museum of American Art staff and volunteers for your hospitality. Brian your stewardship and devotion to your community is commendable! PS. I didn’t do this alone, thanks to my co-juror Denise for equally guiding this process.

Ginger Owen-Murakami

Professor of Photography and Intermedia
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