

Is "Fair and Balanced" the Right Approach?

by Jeanne Long

[The author wrote this article in response to last month's report on the 2005 Spring Show Awards "Fair and Balanced: One Juror's Approach"---ed.]

I don't want a juror to be fair and balanced. If the best works in a show are all abstract paintings then that's where the awards should rest. If the best works are all floral themes, then they should have the ribbons.

I want a juror who can judge our work based on criteria that consider meaning, depth, vision, emotion, and also superb execution--real works of art, that are a product of a concentrated and conscientious effort to attain a level of mastery.

I don't want a juror who selects work based on style and technique and then demeans it, all in an effort to be fair and balanced. This leads to a show which lacks integrity and meaning and it makes the receiving of honors a capricious and even confusing event.

I've only been engaged in show entry since 2001. I read articles in art publications that said to get gallery acceptance, enter and win competitions so that you will have credentials with which to approach a gallery owner. This made sense to me so I started entering. I won an award in my first show. That got my attention to the judging process. Before entering, I had only been to a few shows and looking at the awards, I assumed they meant that the paintings were the most successful examples of the medium. I thought that the judges were setting

these paintings apart based on a knowledge of art in general and watercolor technique in particular. Then when my own painting got an award, I was even more interested in knowing what the selection meant. I soon was drafted to assist in the shows and I heard from board members that the judging process was severely flawed. I felt dismayed. It all seemed so wrong since I thought the winning of awards was supposed to single out high quality work that was to be sought out by the public. Hearing that so much of the judging was simply likes and dislikes of the judges came as a real shock.

So, I began reading up on the judges before each show--looking at their work, seeing if they had publications, etc. And I approached the show with the judge's emphases in mind. Then I realized that some

—cont. on p. 3

September Program: Your Creative Heart

Dr. Catherine Warrick will present our September program entitled "Connect to creativity through heart centered meditation."

People using these practices report a clear and compelling vision, a deep sense of direction and purpose and a greater confidence in their talent and ability. Something we can all use as artists! Be sure to mark September 8th on your calendar and be prepared to add some new tools to your emotional and creative tool

Many Thanks!

With the end of our meeting year, it is time for a hearty "Thank you!" to the many people who volunteer their time to make our great programs possible. Thanks to our departing show chairs, Holly Landauer and Mary Hanson for two years of beautiful shows in glorious spaces. Thanks to departing Program Chair Anne Graves for scheduling exciting and inspiring demos (including Cheng-Khee Chee--what a special treat!), and to Sandy Muzzy, Tom Nelson and Roz Stendahl for providing the treats and coffee to keep us going through our meetings and receptions. Thanks to MarySue Kruger for leading our sometimes contentious discussions and working —cont. on p. 5

People's Choice Award Winner!



▲ "John and David" by Paul Higdon, this spring's People Choice Award Winner.

The People's Choice Award Winner for the 2005 Spring Exhibition is Paul Higdon Paul's father and son portrait "John and David" was the top vote-getter and the winner of the People's Choice Award. Congratulations, Paul!

And, every painting in the exhibition received at least one vote. So, whether your painting won an official award or not, it was "Best of Show" in someone's eyes!

Also in this issue of *BrushStrokes* . . .

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Fall 2005 Show Prospectus
inside this issue!

There is still space available in our Fall workshop with Ken Hosmer. Visit our website www.minnesotawatercolors.com for more info on the workshop and a registration form. Questions? Contact info for our workshop team is on p. 5.

MESSAGE *from the President*



How many art books do you own? At his demo during our May meeting, Dan Wiemer spoke for most of us when he said he's a "book-aholic," and he brought with him one of his early finds, a book of Ted Koutzky's paintings. I always credit my John Yardley and Trevor Chamberlain books as inspiring me to keep things simple and fresh whenever possible, and as a teenager my uncle gave me a Charles Reid book on painting the figure that got me interested in watercolor at a young age. I'd like to share my latest treasure with you, *The Art of Ogden Pleissner*.

I endure frequent good-natured ribbing from my oil painting instructor, Joe Paquet, for being a watercolorist. He's a bit of an art history buff, and when talking about the evolution of landscape painting, oil painters are front and center. There are wonderful exceptions, however, such as Turner, Cox, and Homer—we're all familiar with them, and Sargent is one of my heroes. Joe knows his painters, though, and he prompted me to find some works by Ogden Pleissner (1905-1983), who I admit I'd never heard of. I found a few examples of his work online, but had no luck finding a book of his artwork anywhere. While in New York last month, a few of us spent an afternoon at The Strand bookstore in Manhattan. What a jewel of a place! They had one copy of the book, and although it was priced high and not in the best shape, I jumped on it. The first thing you do when you pick up a book of paintings is flip through it, pausing here and there on pages that grab you. I paused a lot.

He apparently is best known as a "sporting artist," scenes of hunting and fishing and the like. Truth be told, only about 10-15% of his paintings are sporting subjects; the rest are pure landscape. Perhaps his relative anonymity is a result of the artistic times he endured. The 1930's-70's saw the birth of Surrealism, Impressionism, Abstract Expressionism, and Minimalism. Art became all about confusing people. In the introduction of the book, Thomas Buechner writes "Originality, self-expression, and scale are among the principal criteria in today's art world; observation, mood, and taste are among those in the tradition to which Pleissner's work belongs." Observation was definitely his strong suit, and it resulted in rare competence and conviction. Buechner continues, "your intention is to make the branch of a tree. In a second or two you must describe the shape, thickness, color, variety, lighting conditions, and aesthetic function of that branch, that bit of paint. To do this well and without hesitation is very difficult. Ogden Pleissner did it all the time."

He was recruited as an artist/correspondent by *Life* magazine during World War II, and it was only then that he began using watercolors for their mobility. He claims his only lesson in watercolor came from a friend who told him all you need to do is keep your board slanted so the wash runs downhill. Easy, right? Well, he made it look easy. Those watercolors dated 1943, corresponding with his first assignment, are enough to make you sap green with envy. Some people have the gift, and the fact that he was creating these gorgeous watercolors while surrounded by the terror of a World War is nothing short of amazing. There is one in particular, "Bombers Over Exton Hall," that speaks to me. Exton Hall, surrounded by green English countryside, a stream with a couple figures fishing—and a line of distant bombers that could almost be a flock of geese. A triumph of spirit.

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger, and that's evident in his work following the war. The book has plate after plate of Venetian canals, Portugese fishing boats and windmills, parks in Paris, and Scottish landscapes that are so bold in design and deftly painted that you'd swear they were Sargent's. All interspersed with scenes from out west, hunting, etc. He was a painter comfortable in "macho" surroundings, yet he didn't attempt to over-dramatize man in his surroundings. He enjoyed the characters he encountered, and his art is a wonderful record of his life. "I just paint something in the neighborhood I'm in, and I've been in some very nice neighborhoods and seen some lovely country in the course of my work," he says. If you get a chance, check out some of that lovely country as seen through his eyes.



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BrushStrokes Newsletter

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The Right Approach?

—cont. from p. 1

judges, in wanting to appear less biased, actually chose paintings that went against their own style and theory. That was another eye-opener.

I sent for videos from TWSA where the juror comments on each piece he/she accepts into the show. Again a shocker!! I saw nationally prominent artists giving awards to paintings simply because their execution showed extreme patience. To me how long something takes does not make for a superior painting!

Before these eye-openers, I thought that there was something real in the judging process. I thought that any judge for a serious organization would have a deep understanding of art and would be able to select paintings to honor which would provide an inspiration to new artists and those who were trying to improve their abilities. I had no idea that so many judges were simply selecting paintings based on likes and dislikes and their own images of being fair, or generous, or well-read, or sophisticated, etc. I was just ignorant in thinking that there was consistently something higher in the process than ordinary likes and dislikes.

So where do we go from here? Do I settle for the current state like so many others and say that the judging process is meaningless? Do I just think, oh well, I didn't make it here, but I might make it there, and like some nationally prominent artists advise, enter every show imaginable and win some by sheer numbers? I

think those routes are not for me. I have the wish to change the quality of the judging process. I want to restore meaning. I don't want it to continue this way for fear that other beginning artists will have to go through the disillusionment that I went through.

Some say there are no definable standards for what constitutes quality work; there are so many opinions and no consensus. I would agree that that is the current thinking. However, I don't go along with that thinking. I think there is objectively good art that can be recognized by people in that it elicits an emotional response in the viewer that is universal. I know that this is not a popular thought. One step down from objectively good art, I think there is noble art, art that elevates by its subject and its rendition. I think the qualities that describe this noble art can be delineated.

Is there no way to remedy the current judging dilemma? If there is no agreement on what makes art worthwhile, then how could anyone judge a show with any authority? I know that art is not tennis where rules are so easily set forth, but I still think that there are definable qualities that make for good art. What can we do to restore integrity and meaning to the judging of our shows? ■

[The author raised this issue at the May board meeting, and the board agreed that it is difficult to find suitable judges. The board is preparing to review our existing judging criteria and conduct a discussion of the issues raised in this article at a general membership meeting in the fall.—ed.]

People's Choice Winner Responds to Critique

by Paul Higdon

[The following comments are excerpts from Paul Higdon's response to our Spring Show Judge's comments on his work, and to a letter which he subsequently received from the judge, Bela Petheo.—ed.]

While Mr. Petheo's comments were humorous, I was surprised at the degree of intensity in his opinion regarding my piece "John and David." Having studied fine art and degreed at the university level I am no stranger to passionate critique, yet something else seemed to be at play here. His oscillation between hatred and admiration revealed an uneasiness inside him that sought resolution.

After the presentations, I joked with him and his wife about his unorthodox social manner and we had a nice chuckle—he relaxed after I mentioned how one of my past teachers, another Hungarian master, Zoltan Szabo, taught me to paint for my soul's edification and to strive to stay individualistic/unique no matter what. "Be aware of your audience, but be more aware of your heart." Now, I find meaning in reflecting the world as it is, especially in portraiture. This has been a personal evolution. Having progressed from abstract expressionism, to

simple naturalism.

When working with portraits at this level, precise realism is essential. After studying my subject(s) I shoot photos at multiple angles, then compose a final scene in the studio. I often change clothing, backgrounds or lighting to achieve the effect I'm after. Only after I began to paint in this highly objective manner did my soul soar. The grace offered me is that I no longer have to paint inside the closed loop within academia and contemporary media criticism.

My ultimate goal now is to grow in a looser, emotional expressionism within tight realism—a combination of both. Mr. Petheo then volunteered that if I achieved this goal it would be extraordinary.

I admire Mr. Petheo for his artistic and professional accomplishments and I believe we parted as friends. ■

An Apology from the Spring Show Judge

[Letter received by Paul Higdon from the Spring Show Judge, Bela Petheo.—ed.]

Dear Colleague Higdon,

A short while ago I was asked to judge the annual show of your watercolor society. I was asked also to comment on the award winning works. By and large, I think I did a good job. On retrospect, howev-

Enter the State Fair!

by Dianne Jandt

Thinking about entering the State Fair Fine Arts competition this year? Registration for the 2005 Minnesota State Fair Fine Arts Show is now done all online at their website www.mnstatefair.org. Just click on the "Competition" button and then choose "Fine Arts" in the "Departments Links" box.

Registration is required and will only be available online. Registration absolutely closes on Monday, July 11, 2005. Keep in mind, all changes to a registered item must be completed by Monday, July 11, 2005. Changes can be made by calling 651-288-4417, e-mailing competition@mnstatefair.org or in person at the Competition Office.

Besides online registration, the website has a downloadable version of the Fine Arts Rules and Regulations and the Identification Tag, which must be attached to your item. Be sure to read the rules before you submit your registration.

It is really a lot of fun for a group of artists to drop off their paintings the last weekend in July and go out for lunch. Then you go back the next weekend and pick up the non-accepted paintings and have lunch again. Also going to the opening preview night is really something that should be enjoyed at least once. The place is packed. The artists who were accepted into the competition are usually there with their families and friends. It's a great place to meet other artists! ■

er, I feel uneasy about the way I commented on your fine piece. It is one thing to vigorously promote or defend one's aesthetic principals—as long as it remains on the high level of academic discourse. However, it is another to stoop to the level of a cheap joke coming from a stand-up comedian working in a red-light district. There was no reason to compare your achievements to the perfect gangland type killing of the Al Capone kind. Yes, it was perhaps "entertaining" but tactless and revealed poor judgment on my part. There is no justification for this and apologies are in order. Thus I take this occasion to tell you how sorry I feel about this stupid incident for which I am taking the full blame—nobody else!

Since my statements were made in public, please feel free to share the content of this letter with everybody who was there. In spite of all I greatly appreciate what you are and what you do. This was not the way to treat a fine colleague like you.

Sincerely,
Bela Petheo

MEMBER happenings

Send member news to: *BrushStrokes*, 1830 Dutch Heritage Ct., Baldwin, WI 54002-5155, or email to lbour@mac.com. Images are welcome and will be used as space permits.

Terry Genesen Becker's watercolor "La Gallina Blanca 198" was chosen for Watercolor USA 2005, a national juried exhibition at the Springfield Art Museum, Springfield, Missouri. The show runs from June 11 to August 7 and was juried by Dr. Peter S. Briggs, author and former Chief Curator at the University of Arizona Museum of Art in Tucson, Arizona.

Mary Hanson's painting "You were only waiting" was also accepted in the Watercolor USA 2005 exhibition at the Springfield Museum in Springfield, MO.



"Road to Northfield" ▲
Dianne Jandt
◀ "You were only waiting",
Mary Hanson
"Worlds in Conflict",
Peggy Hall ▶
"Grandma's House", Jane
Underhill ▼



"Road to Northfield" was awarded First Place in watercolor at the Artists of Minnesota show at Grand Rapids on April 30, 2005.

New members **Peggy Hall** and **Josie Bertie** also both received awards in the recent Artists of Minnesota show. Josie was awarded First Place in the Beginner category, as well as the Creativity Award in the Beginner category.



Jane Underhill's paintings "Grandma's House" and "Potted" were accepted in the Minnetonka Center for the Arts Members Juried Show, running through June 9.

Bonnie Crouch also had her painting "Reflections" accepted into the Minnetonka Center for the Arts Members Juried Show and **John O'Leary** entered three of his digital paintings, and had all three accepted.

Dianne Jandt received Second Place in watercolor for her painting "Cows at Sunset" at the Sister Kenney International Art Show. Dianne's painting



Place in Intermediate Mixed Media, as well as the Creativity Award, in Intermediate Mixed Media, and the People's Choice Award.

Calvin deRuyter is pleased to report that he received a Mathison's Gift Certificate Award of \$250 in this year's Red River Watercolor Juried Exhibition for his painting "Johnson Barn #1". Cal writes "This is a national juried exhibition and I was pleased to even be accepted into this prestigious show, let alone the honor of an award."

Congratulations Everyone! ■

Welcome!!

NEW MEMBERS

We have 406 paid members to date.

Sue Arend
Sandra Cormican
Susan M. Gaulke
Delia "Dee" Nelson

A New Place to Sell Your Art

Soon a parking lot near the Minneapolis Farmers Market will be filled with exhibits by local artists, in a "European" atmosphere. The application deadline for a booth this year has passed, but you might want to scope out Metropolitan Artists Market as a place to sell your work next year—or as a place to buy art this year. Opening day is Saturday, June 18th. More info at www.metroartmarket.com. ■

... and a New Name for an Old Friend ...

Carol A. McIntyre, formerly known as the artist Carol V. Gray, has a new name. Carol is claiming another layer of her true self, and honoring her great-great-grandparents McIntyre, by choosing a name that more accurately reflects her artwork and her personality.

She has a new email address: carol@beyondtheframe.biz, and a new website: www.beyondtheframe.biz! Note the DOT. BIZ (the world is running out of Dot Coms). She invites you all to visit her website at your leisure and share your thoughts and comments. More will be added to the site over the next few months. ■

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Send Workshop listings to: *Workshopper*, 1830 Dutch Heritage Ct., Baldwin, WI 54002-5155, or email to lbaur@mac.com.

Jan Fabian Wallake

►2005–June 13-16. Dillman's Art Resort, Lac du Flambeau, WI. June 13-16, 2005. Contact 715-588-3143.

►2006–June 19-23. Art-in-the-Mountains, Bend, Oregon. Contact: Debra Prater, 541-923-2648.

►2006–Nov. 11-14. Brevard Watercolor Society, Cape Canaveral, FL. Contact: Linda Neal, 321-751-5520.

Jan has a once-a-month, three-hour class in Roseville. If you are interested in joining this fun and friendly group, call Jan at 651-351-1301 (no long term commitment—come when you can, pay only for the class you attend).

Charlotte Laxen

►The Palette of Provence, July 20–31, 2005. Lavender and sunflower fields, markets and magical scenery; 6 nights in Bonnieux, 4 nights in seaside village of Cassis. Limited to 12 artists. Contact: Scottie Watson, 952-285-1272 or scottiew1@msn.com.

Lana Grow

►Aquamedia & Collage: Experimental and Energizing
June 20-24, 2005, Watertown, South Dakota.
Contact: Jennifer Stone 605-882-1396.

Lynne Baur

►Watercolors and Fresh Flowers.
1-4 p.m., June 17, 2005. Northfield Arts Guild, Northfield, MN. Integrating watercolor special effects into florals. Work from fresh arrangements in the Northfield Garden Club's annual display in the gallery. (Digital camera and printer available for reference photos.)
Contact: NAG 507-645-8877 or register online at www.northfieldartsguild.org. ■

Duluth Area Workshop

The Duluth Art Institute is offering *Discover Color!* a watercolor workshop with Rose Edin, June 6-10, 9am-4pm, \$350 (\$420 non-members). Rose Edin has signature status in the National Watercolor Society and the Transparent Watercolor Society of America. Last year she achieved Master status with TWSA and has been selected to exhibit in its national show the last ten years.

Emphasizing color harmonies and complements, Rose will help you "loosen up," bringing freedom and spontaneity to your paintings.

Contact: Shannon Cousino, 218-723-1310.



Upcoming MnWS Workshops

Oct 11-14, 2005—Ken Hosmer

Upcoming Weekend Workshops

January 2006—Andy Evansen
March 2006—Fred Dingler

*For MnWS workshop information contact
Bonnie Crouch, coordinator (952-945-0682)
Dianne Jandt, registration (952-891-2375)
or John O'Leary, publicity (952-888-0638)*

Many Thanks!

—cont. from p. 1

behind the scenes to keep our Presidents from being overwhelmed completely, to Gary Marquardt for keeping track of the financial side and shepherding us through the 501(c)(3) process, and to Emmy White for keeping clear records of our sometimes confusing and freewheeling board and member discussions. Thanks to Jan Vaughan for helping us deepen our ties to Northstar Watercolor Society, and to Terrie Christian for being such a tireless advocate for the membership as a whole.

And a heartfelt thanks to all those who volunteered to take up new duties and keep our programs and activities running smoothly: Emmy White, who has moved from Secretary to Vice President, Paul Higdon, our new Secretary, Dianne Jandt (Treasurer), CeCeile Hartleib and Terry Kayser (Fall Show), Deb Chapin (Spring Show), Sandy Muzzy (Programs), Jeanne Long (Northstar/MnWS Liason), Ruth Hoglund and Kathleen Sovell (Hospitality), and Anne Graves (Member-at-Large).

And thanks to Andy Evansen (President) Ruth Valgamae (Librarian), Kris Melby (Publicity), Bonnie Crouch, John O'Leary and Dianne Jandt (Workshops), for continuing in their current positions. And a very special thank you to Marian Alstad, our Membership-Chair-in-Perpetuity. What would we do without her? ■

Northstar News

Workshops

October 17-21, 2005: Jerry Seagle

Contact Carol Jernigan (651) 459-5103

See the Northstar website

www.northstarwatercolorssociety.com
for info on summer paint-outs.

Meetings

May 19. Carla O'Connor demo

September 22. Frank Webb demo

Meeting location is Centennial United Methodist Church, 1524 W. County Rd. C2 at Snelling in Roseville.

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Summer Paint-outs!

Grab your easel and sunscreen—it's paint-out time! Dress for the weather, bring a lunch and meet at the designated location at 9 a.m., rain or shine. For severe weather cancellation info, check MnWS voice-mail at 952-996-9228. Questions? call Andy Evansen: 651-480-1742.

Jun 15 (Wed): Washburn Fair Oaks Park (across from Mpls Institute of Arts). Brown bag it or have lunch at the Art Institute and spend the afternoon visiting their collections.

Jun 25 (Sat): Boulder Bridge Farms. I-494 to Hwy 7; west on 7 for 10 miles; right on Smithtown Rd about a mile; left on Boulder Bridge. Park right on the road by the old barn, there's a trail down to the lake from there.

Aug 17 (Wed): Downtown Hastings. Meet at the Green Mill parking lot (Hwy 61 & 10th St.)

Aug 20 (Sat): Willow River State Park (WI) —I-94 East to WI; take exit 4, go north on Hwy 12 to Cty U; left on U which becomes Cty A; park is 1.7 mi on left. (Park sticker req'd, so carpooling would make sense.) Meet at beach/nature center parking lot. ■

MNWScalendar

Programs are held the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm.

The Minnesota Watercolor Society meets monthly September–May. No regular meetings in June, July or August. See p.5 for information about summer paint-outs. Happy summer painting!

September

September 8: Dr. Catherine Warrick-
"Connecting to your Creativity thru
Heart-Centered Meditation".

SEPT. 29: FALL SHOW AWARDS
RECEPTION, Banfill-Locke Center for
the Arts (replaces October meeting)

October

No regular meeting in October.
Oct 11–14: Ken Hosmer workshop

LOCATION: Christ Presbyterian Church,
6901 Normandale Blvd., Edina, MN
(Corner of 70th St. S. and Hwy 100)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

MnWS Membership Dues:

- Single: \$27
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- Seniors (65+): \$22

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