

## **JUROR'S STATEMENT**

Art Works Alliance, April 29, 2007

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It was an honor to be asked to be the Juror of the Second Open Exhibition of the Art Works Alliance. It is very difficult to jury an exhibition. The work of each artist presented is a special and personal effort, some of which took many, many hours of time, technical expertise, and materials. It is similar to birthing a "child" by each artist and the emotional feelings of each are rather raw about one's output. However, that is the job of the juror, to select the best of the works that are offered in a forthright and honest manner. It is the job of the juror to bring knowledge of the art world, art history, and art practice to bear on the selection. In my personal case, I try to discern the honesty of the expression in each work. It must have that core truthfulness that is not trite or cloying, not copying of current modes that are popular, and have a clear intent on the part of the artist. In judging an exhibition of this type where artists of many levels are entering, it is a daunting task to try to discern what the level of art expertise each person making the work brings to the task and how successful they have been. And, is this their truly honest effort. It is evident that many people in the northwestern part of the state of Michigan are practicing the making of art. The Art Making process is very difficult. It is not just a "fun" endeavor, but also an endeavor of serious reflection, thinking, discerning, and skill brought together. "Fun" is not the goal, but a side effect. Carl Maslow writes about the "fun" in his book "Peak Experiences." The high from the difficult effort and the relative success of that hard work is the fun that one gets.

In addition to a basic honesty, Art is more than a mere representation of images as one sees them in the world. Art is about content and ideas; check out the arguments between Michelangelo and the Pope during the painting of the Sistine Chapel; and skill to present those ideas in a way that best communicates it. Many works had great skill, but no idea that was evident other than mirror the image. Some were heavy with content and not enough skill to carry the idea off. Many lacked formal elements that help to make an idea strong and vibrant. And, alas, there were many worthy works that had been so over framed and over matted that the image was destroyed. It is the artist's responsibility to not let framers destroy their works. Remember that they are in business to sell you the most frame and mats that they can. Most works do best with simple mats that breathe, simple frames working as a subtle "period" at the end of the "art" sentence. Double mats, mats that put a dark line around an edge so as to not let a work breath, and heavy framing of light hearted or light and delicate works makes it so difficult to see the work that it renders it ineffective. The whole presentation must be seen together, and the artist is the one that ultimately decides. Also, the length of time it takes to make a work is not a high value. Some works take months to make, even years. Others take a few minutes. The time is irrelevant. It should take as long as it needs to take to make what is desired to make. Some works that were obviously very time consuming to make missed their mark with over wrought compositions or symbols that were not clear to the viewer. When in doubt, simplify. Let the composition or form sing, do not crowd it with more than it needs. There is an expression that I have often

used with my students over the years. Do not, “gild the lily”. A beautiful flower such as a lily needs no help. Alas, there were many “gilded lilies” presented.

There are a great variety of worthy works represented, and I believe that the show I selected is strong and vibrant. I was impressed with the variety of 2-Dimensional works presented. The painters, drawers, and photographers were in great evidence. It was wonderful to see many artists using new technology in digital prints. On the other hand, I was disappointed to see so few 3-Dimensional works presented. I am aware that there are many potters in the area, and there were so few representations from that segment of the local artists.

For the selection of the prizes, the work and its' presentation had to be perfect. There could be no errors of visual judgment. I could have made a few more selections for these awards, but 7 honorees were all that were allowed.

I want to thank Todd Springer for inviting me to come to your area and serve your group as a critical evaluator. It is a service that I enjoy and hope will be instructive. I enjoyed working with all of those who helped organize, move, and fetched and toted during the jurying process.