

Juror Statement: Gallery Uptown Winter Arts Festival 2020

Fred Bivins

It was an honor to be the juror for the Gallery Uptown Winter Art Festival for 2020. I had a fun, yet difficult time winnowing down the art to the point that it would be cohesive and fit in the gallery. But in the end, I feel we have a show well worth visiting.

As I've been involved in juried art competitions for decades, I know the questions artists ask when their works aren't selected, but I did not keep an individual log of the reasons why some are in or why some were not included. But I can say that several were left out because of presentation, possibly the framing, or matting detracted from the art. Possibly the art did not reflect the seriousness of intent that might have made it a more complete work. As always, there is the possibility that something in my lunch made me see a piece in a different light. As jurors are all by nature subjective as are all humans, it's at times personal preference that dictates. I have always tried to select a show that goes outside my comfort zone. I've told many people over the years that if I selected only what I liked a show would be entirely made of impressionist landscapes which would not be a good representation of an open competition. I hope I have something most people will like while striving to select (subjectively) the best of what was entered.

The only pieces that I will talk about now are the ones I selected for awards.

There was one Sponsored Award I was asked to select, the **Mary T. Harvey Award**. As it is a memorial award and I was told a little about its background and the sponsor's preference for florals and peaceful countryside, I selected ***Follow the Road***: by William Randall. It reminded me of my long-departed grandparents and more specifically, the road in front of their house in Belding. When I was a boy, I was not allowed to follow that road so in my mind it could have gone anywhere in the world. It could have taken me all the way to Australia for all I knew. I would be happy to think that Mary Harvey would be very content on that road, where ever it took her.

Honorable Mentions were given to:

A Break in the Chain Permits Chaos to Reign: by Sue Boehme. This glass piece defies understanding once you realize that the top was not made contiguous with the bottom. They match perfectly. It is a piece to look at and ponder.

Stacked Memories: by Sara Gambill-Haverman. You can hear and feel and smell the river, even though it is not in sight. On a damp and dreary winter's day, or any day for that matter, it is a tonic and one can almost feel the dappled sunlight on his face.

Snails Galore: by Marlan Cotner. I kept coming back and looking at this piece to see more. Never before have I seen snails as such an intense focus of art, or well anything other than a menu item. It is delightful and begs for another look, and another, and another.

Nelsonville: by Carol Cousineau. Another piece in which I saw more each time I looked. Full of color, yet spare and sparse, the artist captured a place I'm not sure I'd want to live, but I loved visiting.

Top Awards:

Third Place: **Summer Night Sky**, by Doug Brinks. Being a wood turner myself I could hardly pass up on the chance to give this piece an award. The sheer terror it must have engendered stepping up to it while it was spinning on the lathe warranted my attention. That, coupled with a good selection of the slab of wood the artist chose, and the simple design additions gave the piece an "other-worldly" dimension, which is just what I think the artist had in mind.

Second Place: **Feathers**, by John Riepma. This exquisite piece of glass is worth a visit all on its own. The delicate "feathering" in the glass would be mesmerizing if you were able to pick it up and view it in the sun. But even on a pedestal with gallery lighting it is grand. The pattern, I understand, took a lot of forethought, a variety of colors, and a dental pick expertly swept through the molten glass.

First place: **Winter**, by Catherine McClung: As I am not a resident of Grand Haven, except in my soul, I don't think I ever met nor can I remember ever seeing the subject of this piece, Katie Cole, on her rounds of the Washington Avenue shops. But when I first met her eyes, I was impressed that while she was old, maybe not much older than me, from her eyes I could tell her spirit had not been worn down by life. Her nature and my intuition were confirmed after I made the selection and was informed she was a very pleasant person and brought a certain grace and happy energy to her community. I commend Catherine McClung on capturing her essence. I have to admit I was a bit surprised to find a portrait by Catherine, as I've known her for her landscapes and especially birds for many years.

Thank you again to the Gallery Uptown Winter Art Festival Committee for entrusting my judgement in the process of bringing this show to your community.

Sincerely,

Fred Bivins