

This is Robert Burrige and it's time again for my President's Bi-Monthly message. As promised I wanted to pass along what I have learned while jurying the Sausalito Art Festival and how to increase your chances at getting into a juried show. I use their "system" when I jury a show. I am often asked by the show coordinators they want only the best work accepted. It reflects on the professionalism and the board's mission statement. I have also juried shows where I am asked to comment or critique each piece. I don't have the luxury to speak with each artist so I've devised a "grid of comments," explained later. First, I either walk the show alone, or for slides, I sit back and watch the slide show several times. I get a sense of the overall quality. I make no judgment initially. After viewing the entries several times, I begin scoring. It is very simple and very fair. Each piece is rated with a #1, #2, #4 or #5.

A score of #1 is given to "absolutely awful" in every way. #2 is given to "has some artistic merit." #4 is given to "really good work" and #5 is given to "absolutely outstanding and original art." There is no #3 because it's the middle of the fence and thus no committed decision (by the juror). When added up, all the #5s get in, and if the quota has not been met, the 4.5s get in and so on down to the #4. This jury process is only to see who gets into this high quality show.

Some art does not get in because others were better. It's that simple for an art festival with "unlimited" wall space. For a juried exhibition, like a National Show, there are other considerations why good art didn't get in, limited wall space being one of them. When I have that constraint, and have to cut really good paintings, I am going to select the ones that have the "WOW Factor." As with all juried shows, there is bound to be a group of disgruntled applicants who invent reasons why their work didn't get in. I have found these artists who complain the most, are usually the worst painters or who have not invested in the time to develop their art. I may be stepping on some toes here, but this is what I've found after many years of jurying and critiquing. Another reason is Poor Presentation. Otherwise known as bad framing, poorly cut mats (usually colored), dirty or scratched glass and improper hanging hardware. I know from experience that "artists" who pick up their "falling apart" frames after an exhibit will blame the hanging committee for mishandling. So, it stands to reason, if your frame and presentation is shoddy, your art won't get accepted in the first place.

As far as critiquing and comments, we've all received returned slides with "not accepted" letters. The problem has been, the letters never say why you did not get in. Most of the time it's because, as I mentioned, a bad presentation, or in the case of slides, a poorly photographed artwork. As you know, the slide has to be perfect because your slide will be used in the show catalog. I'm asked to critique all the applicants. In the past this was not economically feasible for the organization to pay for my or other juror's time writing individual critiques; but now I've come up with a grid check list for "not accepted" comments. Down the left side is a column of applicant's names (or entry numbers) Across the top are 10 titled columns. Each column has a specific art comment at it's top, such as : POOR PRESENTATION, POOR SLIDE, POOR EXECUTION, NO FOCAL POINT, NOT WELL DEVELOPED, POOR COLOR, "PHONY FAR OUT," NO CENTER OF INTEREST, etc. You get the idea. Qualities that I use in critiquing my own work. If an artist asks, the committee can look up or send my comments later on. As a juror, I take my job seriously and am honored when I'm asked. I believe we artists should get qualified feedback about our work. We all need meaningful response. Like it or not, we are in "show business." We show our art and hope for the awards, rewards and business that it brings. I hope this helps you to look at your own work before submitting for a show. It just might increase your chances for show acceptance and for sales of your work.

And a few words about shipping. For fifteen years I have always wrapped my paintings in bubblewrap and packed into cardboard shipping "mirror boxes." For reusable shipping boxes such as our own juried show, I use Airfloat. The paintings are shipped back to me in my own box and I can reuse it again several more times. As with most juried shows I pay a fee for shipping and handling from the other end. Factor in all this additional expense when considering shipping your work. It not expensive... it's called "cost of doing business."

By the way, I always ship FedEx. For me they have the best tracking record and have never lost or damaged one of my paintings.

Next Online President's Message in about two weeks. Subject: Copyright and what it means to you.

Keep your brushes wet!

Bob

