

**MidAtlantic Pastel Society**

**4<sup>th</sup> Annual Member's Judged Exhibit 2020**

...And the winners are...

**1<sup>st</sup> "BLM" by Emily Christoff**

I'm not usually one for using art as commentary, but there's much to admire about this work even aside from its message, which is powerful. The cool blues and violets (and black) of most of the painting set off the warm brown of her skin (which may be the true subject of the painting) and those audaciously red shoes which seem to be a symbol of her power (She gets where she is in life on her own two feet.) The shoe on our left is not so much exiting the painting as pushing our eyes up the long leg to her arms and then to her face. Her right arm leads the eye to her other red shoe and then back up that leg, again to the face. The perspective on the figure is elongated, from a close angle, subtle and masterfully drawn. The abstracted embellishments add a feeling of being able to see into this girl's psyche. She's a princess, rich in love, honor and respect. These jewellike patterns bounce our eyes around the painting, but always bring us back to her face, which captures and holds us with the strength of her gaze.

**2<sup>nd</sup> "Pet Me" by Shelia Chandler**

The design of this painting caught me from the beginning. Reminiscent of the post impressionist work of Degas and Lautrec, influenced the design principles of Japanese prints, this cat and carpet have almost a yin/yang balance and a graphic boldness. The textures are amazing. (The title fits perfectly!) The contrast between the texture of the carpet (shaded with fingerprints from the black fur? Clever!) and the unapologetically frenzied fur adds to the overall feeling of balance and contrast. The cat itself is held together with tones and textures and shapes but almost no lines. He is one big heavy furry mass supported perfectly by the delicate white carpet.

**3<sup>rd</sup> "Pathway to the Light" by Maria Reardon**

Masterful pastel application. This artist really knows the pastel medium. The color vibrancy and atmospheric perspective, control of values and color temperatures are superb. The composition is so ideal that when I laid over the golden spiral out of curiosity, it centers in on the sparking light on the distant water. The energetic strokes and the diagonals of grass, sand and path create the movement of a windy summer day. I suspect the artist knows and loves this place, and it shows in the result. Also, to have such fresh immediacy to the style (it has the look of plein air) on a piece this large is very impressive.

**HM "My Cat" by Julia Lesnichy**

The values and temperatures are superbly rendered in this outdoor cat portrait. The soft warm light and cool shadows really make this painting glow with life. Everything about this says "soft" which suits the subject perfectly. The strategic combination of softened edges and crisp marks lead the eye throughout. The centered face and stillness of the pose give importance to the subject.

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#### HM "Please Don't My Love" by Mel Neale

I almost passed by this painting as an awkwardly cropped portrait, but on the second pass I noticed the details, and combined with the title this image took on new meaning. In a way it's a painting within a painting and the crop which seemed odd at first actually perfectly places the sunglasses in an optimal position for the eye to travel down and up and around her face, always coming back to the phone in her hand and the car on the road in front of her. Is she following behind the car, or about to crash into it? We don't know, but the ambiguity of the moment and her disassociated expression create a frightening tension in this piece that's also heightened by the soft, happy colors.

#### HM "Fascination" by Terry Atkinson

Ahhh, the harmony of color! The violets, pinks and oranges give vibrance to these coral roses and keep the painting from being simply monochromatic. The rhythm is delightful without being too repetitive. Key to the whole composition are the curls of cellophane meandering through, and the transparency effect is masterfully rendered.

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Please understand that this was a wonderfully challenging judging job. So many entries were deserving of awards and with only 6 places to fit, decisions were difficult! When looking at artwork with a mindset on judging, I first look for basic strengths in composition/design (values/line/form/rhythm), color harmony, and technical handling of the medium (mark making/technique/edges.) Of those that pass that initial screening, I look for originality of an idea or presentation, and something less definable that sends an emotional impact. The strongest combination of all these factors is what sets award winning work apart from simply good or great work.

Congratulations to all of you for having the ambition to enter and for continuing to create during these trying times. Keep on painting and entering, because every judge is a different person, with their own set of personal criteria on what makes an excellent work of art stand apart from all the rest, and you just never know what that particular judge on that particular day will find in *your* excellent work!

- Rita Kirkman, PSA, CPS, IAPS-EP