

Juror Spotlights Diverse Works for Awards

Written by Michael LoGuidice
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More than \$2,000 in awards will be presented on Friday, April 6, at the opening reception of the 25th Annual Rock Island Fine Arts Exhibition, which will be on display in the Augustana College Art Gallery through April 29.

The annual juried competition (one of the few in this area) was open to artists residing within a 150-mile radius of the Quad Cities (excluding the metro Chicago and Des Moines areas), and 125 artists entered 241 pieces. The exhibition includes 58 works by 49 artists, 24 from Illinois and 34 from Iowa. Davenport had 19 artists represented in this year's show.

Stephan Jost, this year's juror, has a background in cutting-edge art but also has an appreciation of work in more traditional veins. "What an enriching experience it is to work with an energetic and thoughtful juror who brings out-of-town viewpoints to bear," commented curator Sherrie Maurer. "As much as he is involved in the avant-garde of New York City's art scene, while here, he observed that he was glad to see a loving painting of a flower, with all the historical tradition it recalls."

Jost has a broad expertise in media ranging from original prints to photography to stained glass. He is curator of academic programs and exhibitions at the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College in Ohio and began his career at Sotheby's, the New York-based auction house. He has also held internships at the Philips Collection in Washington, D.C., and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Jost noted that this type of exhibit succeeds only when people put their art and their feelings on the line, and his awards reflected that philosophy. The winners were:

- First Place: Bruce Walters, Davenport, *At the Corner of Deerfield & Main*, digital. Walters' *At the Corner of Deerfield and Main* views the world through the windshield of a car, seemingly telling us that, today, most of us only see landscapes and streetscapes from behind the windshield of our vehicles.

- Second Place: Sara Bell, Davenport, *Cetus*, oil on panels and mixed media. Part of her mythological series *Box of Stars*. The juror was taken with the allegory and use of visual

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surprise – the three-dimensional box within the painting.

- Third Place: Allison L. Bush, Iowa City, *Contaminant Stills*, bronze. Bush's piece is a bronzing of three dead birds to be mounted on a wall. The twisted organic shapes evoke an immediate emotional reaction.
- Honorable Mention: Bruce Carter, Davenport, *Creation-Morning*, oil crayon. Jost called Carter's Creation-Morning "mystical." The impressionistic but fresh use of light gives this painting an otherworldly quality.
- Honorable Mention: Anne-Marie D. Gephart, Davenport, *Sheep & Cow*, watercolor. A whimsical watercolor. The juror said he was taken by the inclusion of flowered elements throughout the painting.
- Honorable Mention: John Gerstner, Davenport, *House of the Lord #38*, photo-painting. This very professional photo-painting makes me want to see the first 37. It clearly communicates the mood of the church during a particular service.
- Honorable Mention: Wende S. Rolfe, Monmouth, Iowa, *An Italian Grandmother*, oil on wood panel. Jost was attracted to Rolfe's use of visual puns. An Italian Grandmother uses a Madonna image that fell out of favor when painting women's breasts became a taboo in Western society.
- Honorable Mention: Steve Sinner, Bettendorf, *Celtic Dream*, wood turning with silver leaf. *Sinner's Celtic Dream is a finely crafted wooden vase that becomes sculpture. The juror specifically included it a work done in what 19th or 20th Century art snobs would call a "craft" medium, but he considered art.*

I look forward to the hanging of the complete show to see more than the eight works mentioned here. The show opens on Friday with a reception and awards ceremony from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Jazz musicians Dr. Tim O'Dell, Bill Golden, and Craig Weiman will play during the first hour of the reception, with awards presented at 5:30 p.m.