

National Competition 'Works on Paper' at the Long Beach Island Foundation

By PAT JOHNSON | Jul 13, 2016,

Artists not only brighten our lives with beautiful and inspiring works, they also tweak our sense of self and society. This is proven in an excellent exhibit now at the Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts and Sciences through July 20.

The 18th National Juried Competition and Exhibit "Works on Paper" was collected and culled from 1,293 submissions from 30 states by guest curator Carter E. Foster of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Foster is the Steven and Ann Ames curator of drawing at the Whitney and the "pre-imminent expert in the field of drawing."

The Whitney is known for its profound ability to collect and display the best of contemporary art works, and this exhibit is just as quirky and fresh as any in NYC. The exhibit allowed for a broad interpretation of what it means to be a "Work on Paper," so you will find works executed in a number of mediums and on a variety of structures.

For example, Ghislaine Fremaux's large "Untitled (Aaron)" figure is drawn with pastel and watercolor on paper that is covered in epoxy resin. Not only is the image beautifully rendered, making the most of intersecting colored lines, but it has the added effect, thanks to the plastic coating, of being a monumental work of art just cut from a billboard or a bus stop. This über, urban portrait won an honorable mention.

The first-place award went to Gail Postal's colored drawing "Pedro." The face of the young man is a subdued graphite drawing while his pullover is completed in solid blocks of color executed in colored pencil. "I am attempting to re-create the feeling of old Japanese hand-tinted photographs," she stated.

Maryann Williams won a second-place award for her "Jelly Three" reduction linoleum print. "I create a multi-colored image by sequentially carving and layering colors," she explains in her artist statement. "Each subject is chosen for its inherent beauty, delicate patterning and vibrant hue."

A reduction linoleum print is a bit more involved than a single print off a linoleum block. The artist uses the same block for all the colors; the first print has the most area of color, the second print of a second color has more of the block removed and so on.

Third place went to Diego Lasansky's "Rembrandt" intaglio print. Rembrandt is holding a dove. Diego is the grandson of Mauricio Lasansky, an artist considered to be one of the "Fathers of 20th Century American Printmaking" and best known as the creator of "The Nazi Drawings," 30 drawings and one triptych that express his revulsion after viewing images of the Nazi death camps, and exhibited at the Whitney in 1967.

It may be both a blessing and a curse to follow in such large footsteps. Diego's statement seems to reflect the desire to be critiqued on his own merits: "I have a sense of

responsibility as an artist to be self-disciplined and to constantly develop a rationale for my work, to both invent and be a craftsman; to experiment anyway I can and draw inspiration from any source that exists; to use my own life experience both intellectual and emotional and to always be aware of the importance of maintaining a fearless attitude when I am being experimental.”

Honorable mention went to Adam Christensen for his graphite drawing “The Relative Safety of Prison.” The drawing of a figure with legs drawn up tightly inside a rib cage is surrounded by lightly drawn cursive words and phrases. His artist’s statement explains that this piece is about his own and others’ struggle with addiction. “Through the use of text both legible and illegible I draw on the conversations, thoughts and writings we use to sift through problems. This stream of information is constantly running, consciously or unconsciously, hidden or exposed and is the basis of the decisions we make.”

Art Vandenberg was more conceptual and dispassionate when he created his tour de force, “Kimono: kinetic information modulated objective neuron self-organization (space-time continuum fabric)” in pen and ink, which garnered him an honorable mention. His drawings explore the ideas of self-organized memory from the perspective of quantum physics. “I modeled this by making a random mark, then successively adding marks, remembering the growing sequence of marks. ... Using a grid-like structure, I filled each cell with the gray sets of marks until a completely filled cell is created and then I remove a mark proceeding by successively ‘un-remembering’ marks until I return to a blank state – A reasonable analogy to life (where) each moment is adding or losing information.”

Likewise, Corrie Slawson’s artist statement illuminates what she has attempted (and achieved) in her layered photo-lithograph “Corner Church in Bright Prairie Light (Road Closed).” She looks for interesting urban landscapes on her daily commute through Cleveland, looking for “underdog places,” places that show patterns related to population loss, places with historical tensions. In this example the photo-lithography of an abandoned church and road closure is manipulated with spray paint, pencil and screen print to fracture the image and convey the sense of loss.

More works that need mentioning:

Sarah Newsome’s “Social Issues” linoprint is a stark black and white newspaper-like poster with symbols or headlines blaring rape, racism, gay rights, feminism and gun control. Color would detract from the messages.

“Floating Self-Portrait” by Joseph Opshinsky is a cut paper collage. The inspiration for this Pennsylvania artist comes steeped in the scarred landscape of former coal-mining towns. Mary Lou Novak’s collage and acrylic painting “Attack of the Evil Emojis” is self-explanatory, and it’s a giggle. A whole book should be devoted to the humor in contemporary art.

Andrew Au uses a mundane ballpoint pen to draw a fanciful machine on illustration

board titled “Skolem.”

Wood block prints astounded some viewers for their intricate designs. Kevin Clark’s “Coastal Sun” makes use of the wood grain inherent in his stamping structure.

Straightforward works were also welcomed for the exhibit, and the one local artist chosen for the show was Lisa Budd and her watercolor “Crossing Powell Street.”

An oil on paper portrait, “Ennis” by Thalia Chantziara is masterful.

The exhibit was brought to the LBIF by Daniella Kerner and Gail Sidewater, co-chairs of the Art and Exhibition Committee.

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