

1. Best in Show – Allison Krajcik
“Sequinned Promises”

A top winner in any competition is a painting that continues to call your attention each time you walk into a room. This piece does just that. Both the subject matter and the rendering of the light are startling. The asymmetrical composition has a contemporary feel the plays beautifully with the choice of a neutral blue-green background. The soft scumble of violet over the warm gold of the milkweed pods creates the perfect shadow area, as well as setting up a subtle vibration with both the golden light and green tinted background. However, my favorite part, and what drew me back to the piece repeatedly, was the wispy tendrils of just released silk that seem to dance away from the pod. Magical.

2. Award of Excellence – Corey C Pitkin
“Old Ghosts”

Creating a sense of graceful simplicity- the ability to reduce an image to its essence and to pull the viewer in to the beauty of line and form with what appears to be little effort is, to my mind, the height of artistic skill. In this piece the limited palette highlights the soft mood established by the restful stance and downward gaze of the model. The curve of the banister with its backlight finials directs the viewer towards the figure while continuing to support that initial sense of grace. The final stroke of expertise is visible in the single line of light that describes the woman’s profile with just the right amount of detail. Simple and elegant. A stunning piece.

3. Award of Honor – Karen Tighe
“Sunlit Lotus”

This little gem distinguishes itself for its flowing lines and the powerful drama that results from the warm reds of the petals against the deep, subtle greens of the background. While the petals are largely rendered in neutral shades, occasional pops of bright warmth punctuate the scene and add extra life to the composition. The left-hand leaf, dropping gracefully towards the water contrasts perfectly with more vertical stems. The mark making is sure and precise. The violet in the water adds an unexpected tone, perfectly complementing the warm green streaks in the background water. Just a beautiful piece.

4. Allied Artists of America, Mamut Pastels, Ampersand - Valerie Mandra
“Passage”

If I had to pick one great strength of our pastel medium, it would be the mystery of color layers. Building color is not always easy, especially when the colors are complementary, or the values are not particularly close. This piece uses that strength to its fullest. The viewer is pulled in by the powerful use of orange against the receding blue-green. Then texture and more subtle color shifts entice the eye to move around the space. The small dark punctuation marks enhance the experience. The feeling is of power and motion.

**5. Pastel Society of West Coast Award:
Maureen Dale Spinale “Bewitched”**

Often the landscape is so compelling in itself that it is hard to see how it might be abstracted. This beautiful piece reminds us, without excessive detail, of our local woods in fall when bare limbs and golds abound. Using a freedom of marks and simple verticals, the artist knew which branches to expose, and just how to layer the colors to evoke the leaves as they turn color and fall. The very low horizon supports the majesty of the tall, thin trees. The use of blue green in the understory is both original and appropriate for the bright feel of the woods at that time of year.

**6. Copley Society of Art, Jack Richeson & Co., Dakota Pastels:
Marla Baggetta “Not Forgotten”**

For many of us, it’s the story in a painting that makes it memorable. This piece speaks to me of the principle of finding beauty in what is aged and broken. The artist’s skill is noticeable in the sure color marks and the choices of color without the need for blending. Look closely at the grill on the truck. One simple mark set slightly askew describes the shape of a broken grill with subtlety and precision. The rich patches of orange on the door and the warm red on the wall behind the hood give the eye a place to rest in the profusion of textures created by the many marks **that** build the form of the truck itself. Finally, the masterful rendering of lost and found edges adds a bit of shine in a few spots, a reminder of a brighter youth. The truck speaks lovingly of its many years of service. Now it can rest.

**7. Providence Art Club, Jack Richeson & Co.:
Jory Mason “Early Spring”**

Originality was the word that came to mind to best describe this piece. The composition in itself is compelling, with graceful lines pulling attention back and forth across the vertical format. But it was the choice of vivid green leaves against the cold blue of the snow tipped branches and electric sky that catches the viewer’s attention. There is a distinct feeling of cold emanating from the snow with the crystals believably rendered. The leaves are both fantastical and believable. A very unusual approach to a familiar subject.

**8. Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Art Club, Pan Pastel:
Shuk Susan Lee “Lily No. 2”**

Tucked in its corner in the gallery, this little beauty could have easily been overlooked. Reminiscent of the works by painters from the Art Nouveau movement, the model sits beneath a decorative arch and stares provocatively at the viewer. Her graceful hand gesture enhances the lines of composition and the lily in her lap, repeated in her period headdress, harkens back to a bygone era. The unusual stylization and the careful drawing make this small work a standout in this show.

**9.Pastel Society of America, Blick Art Materials
Laurinda Phakos O'Connor "Snow Packed"**

Power emanates from each stroke in this stellar painting. Although it is a wonderful abstract composition, the underlying representational aspect of the piece is also clear. The color of the background trees provides the neutral notes that allow the warm tones of the exposed ground to glow. Most importantly, the confident, clear marks so effortlessly applied on strong diagonals are what make the piece sing.

**10.Cheap Joe's Art Stuff, ShowSubmit
Adrian Soegandi "Captivated"**

The quality of the drawing is what makes this piece stand out in the show. The light on the figure is just cool enough to create a feeling of winter in keeping with the figure's hunched shoulders, hat and jacket. The vertical red of the building suggests radiating warmth and the repeat of the vibrant color in the tiny corner of sock visible above the figure's boot hint at an older gentleman well-prepared for the elements. But it is the careful drawing of the foreshortened right foot that speaks most clearly to the expertise of the artist. The story told by the painting is engaging, but the skill of the artist is what makes it believable.