

## 2017 Juror's Response

Selecting items for inclusion in the Annual Juried Student Art + Design Exhibition was a difficult task, as the quality and variety of the entries was impressive.

In the end, I picked works that showcased a diversity of talent, medium, and imagination. Those selected demonstrate maturity in vision and execution. The editing and clarity of each piece impressed me.

Music can set a mood, and manipulate our emotions. Since the development of sound in movies, music has been a tool used to control our response to the scenes we witness. These emotions may range from agitation-despair-to-relief. Everything depends on the composer's skill.

Artists have similar control. Their work can dive straight into our feelings just as music does.

As a professional graphic designer, I was impressed at the high level of talent among the students. I looked for key elements to select the best in show. Pieces chosen feature a range of mediums, material and approaches.

Principal elements I looked for (not in any specific order):

- Vision
- Conceptual thinking
- Understanding the medium
- Clarity of message
- Tone/Mood
- Reference without copying or being too literal
- Hierarchy
- Composition (balance/scale/cropping)
- Understanding color
- Editing
- Workmanship
- Level of complexity
- Presentation

I was not reading from a checklist of these traits. It was more of an organic process. I believe that the most successful work is the one that looks effortless. As in most things, when a work is done well, it looks easy.

The use of collage is a medium familiar to art students. Rachael Hoffman's piece, *End Homelessness*, is a beautiful example of a seemingly effortless manipulation of collage to deliver a serious social message to humanity. Perhaps it is her use of scale and editing, but it is hard to ignore or look away from the small figure. It challenges us to look.

Elaine Ruth Santos's *Vice* and Amanda Lietuunikas's *Second Hand Smoke* are conceptually strong, mature and beautifully executed showing a masterful use of the tools they each chose to use.

Carolyn Blazeck's ceramic *Gathering Basket* is a masterpiece. Her meticulous attention to detail and skillful handling of the material show a sophisticated understanding of form and essence.

Ariel Pelayo's *New York City* brims with the energy that of the metropolis. This piece captures the vibrancy and scale of Gotham. The rich variety of colors combined with the complex layers of forms, explorations of colors, lines and patterns take the viewer on a dizzying ride through this city of dreams.

## 2017 Juror's Response

Walt Polley's *Violet* is exquisite. The viewer is rewarded with a visual feast, as the photograph invites us to come close and linger. I picked up his piece at least four times just for the pleasure of observing its details, and to ask myself, "Is it a photo or a painting?" My mind said one thing, but my eyes wanted to continue searching.

The homage to Van Gogh in Abigail Allan's painting is well done. It is neither literal nor too heavy handed.

The deep humanity in Michelle Houser's photographs is palpable. These images captured intimate moments in the people featured. Each image is loaded with a story, and open for the audience interpretation. The moment of doubt in the look of the young man as he gazes up? The elderly man filling out a form. Is he homeless? There is something poignant about that image.

The echoes of time-gone-by is captured beautifully by Melanie Canatella's keen eyes in her color and black and white photographs, *Ghost Room* and *Aisquith Street*.

The examples listed above are representative the impressive work of *all* of the exhibitors.

It was an honor to be asked to select.

Guenet Abraham  
Associate Professor  
Visual Arts, Graphic Design  
UMBC