

DEMYSTIFYING THE JURYING PROCESS

Making baskets is an art, and art is a form of communication that is meant to be seen. For new—and sometimes even experienced—basket makers, taking the step from the solitary pleasure of weaving to exhibiting baskets for all the world to see can be daunting. The process can be a mystery, one that we'd like to shed some light on. Since one of the best ways for an artist to show their work is through entering juried exhibitions, we recently asked three respected jurors to explain something about what they look for in jurying a show. We posed five questions to each of them and here we share their generous responses.

What criteria do you consider when accepting/rejecting work to be included in a juried exhibition?



BRUCE PEPICH

I approach each jurying without a preconceived point of view—each competition is a unique set of artworks and circumstances. The entries should direct the process and I select what I think are the best examples of the works submitted. I look for diversity in entries, a sense of immediacy, and a fresh point of view even if the work is “traditional.” I like exhibitions with a variety of viewpoints among the exhibitors, where pieces converse with each other and also with the viewer.

If I am familiar with the applicant's work, I block that history out of my mind and consider only the piece submitted to establish an even a playing field where I select from only what has been entered. When viewing multiple entries from one artist, I seek a unique personal statement: an artist whose voice brings something new to the conversation in the field. I also look for consistency within the body of work.



JANE SAUER

My main consideration when jurying an exhibition is the quality of the work coupled with originality. I work very hard not to let my personal biases intrude on my decisions. If taking a jurying process as a whole, I seek to have a balance of different styles and media but not to the detriment of quality. It can be a delicate balance. I will reject work that I feel is derivative of someone else's work.



LLOYD HERMAN

When considering submissions to a juried exhibition, I first look at the entry form for its parameters. The NBO exhibition I selected last year had no such guidelines, and clearly it was open to a broad interpretation of “basket.” Then I quickly go through all images online

to see the range of submissions before beginning to rank them. And I respect the traditions of basketry and like to include contemporary examples such as Shaker baskets, egg baskets, etc.

The difficult part is paring down those I've chosen to the number recommended for the exhibition.

Does the artist's statement figure into your selection? If so, how?

JANE SAUER

I always carefully read an artist's statement. The statement does figure in my decision-making process. I ask myself if the artist accomplished what he/she was trying to communicate. If the artist misses the mark, I will usually reject.

LLOYD HERMAN

The artists' statements are important if I need greater understanding of what I'm seeing. I'm always interested in learning more about an artist's use of unorthodox materials or unusual forms and will usually read those artists' statements to better understand them.

BRUCE PEPICH

Even the best digital images are substantially removed from viewing the original work. If allowed, artist's statements can help the juror better understand the submission. Artists should make their statements as clear as possible in plain language, such as: Why do you make the work? What is your aesthetic intent or message? How does your selection of materials or techniques fit in with your personal aesthetic? And they should stay away from "artspeak." A clearly composed statement can help an application; a poorly written, puffed-up statement can hurt it.

How, or how much, does the quality or skill of execution affect your judgment of a piece?

LLOYD HERMAN

Apparent skill of execution is important—especially in familiar or traditional forms with which I might compare these works.

JANE SAUER

This is where I really have to work hard to keep my personal taste from overriding my decision-making. I personally value craftsmanship and skillful execution but know there is another way of presenting valuable and profound works of art. Sometimes chaotic and messy work is more expressive and fits best what the artist is seeking. I think this is one area where the juror has to be disciplined and open to the many directions art can take.

BRUCE PEPICH

The work should display a knowledge and mastery of the techniques that can be employed using the medium in which the artist chose to work. Even pieces that seek to subvert craft's tradition of technical mastery frequently display a sense of visual organization, technical prowess, and the work of the hand that demonstrates awareness and skill. I expect technical skills and the intellectual content/message of the work to be comparable in quality and execution.

What elements of the submission process can affect an artist's work being selected? (Such as image quality, early or late submissions, etc.)

BRUCE PEPICH

As our teachers told us in school, "Read the instructions before starting the test." There are always more good works than there are spaces in shows, so jurors often have to trim their initial selections later in the jurying to fit the space. Works that do not follow all the rules of a competition—unfocused or poorly executed images, incomplete/improperly completed application materials, missed deadlines, incorrect use of media—can provide a reason to separate works of similar qualities into the accepted and rejected applicant categories.

LLOYD HERMAN

Image quality is important, but selecting three-dimensional works is sometimes difficult from 2-D images rather than direct experience with the object.

JANE SAUER

The biggest downfall for an artist in the submission process is to have inadequate images of the work being submitted. I have rejected work immediately when the image is cut off, fuzzy, or dark. I wonder if the artist didn't even look at the image before submitting. I want the image to be of high enough quality that I can enlarge it and see the detail. Cell phone pictures have inaccurately led artists to think they can take submission quality images of their own work. I don't think they can. Clarity of image is king. I also look for a body of work that is cohesive. I don't want to see every technique the artist has tried.

I encourage artists to read the entry form with great care, provide all information that is requested, and follow the rules. I would not accept late work.

Is there any other advice you'd like to offer artists for submitting work to juried exhibitions?

BRUCE PEPICH

Look at the images and statements you intend to submit as a stranger would—with no foreknowledge of your work. How does your application look to someone seeing it for the first time? Can the juror clearly surmise your entry, understand your point of view, and capture your ideas by looking at your materials? Does this image accurately depict your work?

Competitions are not a perfect system. You may have a piece rejected from one show and accepted by another. Keep applying. Rejection can be bruising to your ego. However, juried exhibitions are one of the main ways we have to present new work on a professional level and also of building your resume to open doors to other venues in the future.

JANE SAUER

I would submit all the information that is allowed to support a submission. That means describe the work and process and whatever else you can spell out about the work. If details can be submitted, be sure to include them. If you are allowed five entrees, be sure to enter at least four pieces. The juror is looking for a body of work and not what might be the one good piece you made.

Juried exhibits are a wonderful way to get your work in front of a lot of eyes. Give each submission your best shot. If you are going to pay the submission fee, follow all directions in detail and with care. Get the best images you can afford. Of course, having good work is the most important. If the work is not solid, no picture or text can gain you entrance.



LLOYD HERMAN was the Founding Director of the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Retiring after 20 years at the Smithsonian, he began to organize craft exhibitions for museums, traveling exhibition service and the U. S. Information Agency, often traveling to speak in conjunction with the tour. He continues to jury competitions widely in the United States and abroad, and has led craft tours to a half dozen foreign countries.



BRUCE W. PEPICH is the Executive Director and Curator of Collections of the Racine Art Museum and the Wustum Museum of Fine Arts. He is a published writer and has served as a juror for over 135 national and international art competitions and fellowship awards. Pepich serves on the Board of Trustees of the American Craft Council and in 2012 was inducted as an Honorary Fellow into the Council's College of Fellows.



JANE SAUER is currently Managing Director of Singular Couture after owning her own gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico for 12 years. She also is a curator, lecturer, writer, and art consultant. This follows many years as a studio artist with works in over 20 museums.



2018 Surface Design Association International Member Exhibition

San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles 520 S. First Street, San Jose, CA 95113
www.sjqmiltmuseum.org
July 22 - October 14, 2018

Important Dates

Call Opens January 8, 2018
Call Closes April 6, 2018

Exhibition Dates

July 22-October 14, 2018

July 22, 2018

Opening Reception

Jurors

Carole Frances Lung,
artist/activist/academic

Amy Di Placido,

SJMQT Exhibitions Curator

Entry Procedure

Entries are to be submitted online through CaFÉTM Call for Entry
<https://tinyurl.com/ybfou7qm>

Questions? Email us at:
info@surfacedesign.org



San Jose Museum of
Quilts & Textiles

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