

Judge's Statement for Northern Indiana Pastel Society Exhibit
Kroc Center - March 2022

I was mesmerized by the fabulous artwork that was on exhibit at the Kroc Center by the Northern Indiana Pastel Society.

One of the things I always look for when judging artwork is a personal voice and a pushing of the medium. As a teacher, I encourage my students to mix their colors and move beyond the basic color that they think to use. I was delighted to see this stunning use of color mixing in most of the pieces in the pastel society's exhibit at the Kroc Center.

I chose Mary Meehan Firtl's, "Pond at St. Pat's Park" for an award immediately as it was so luscious with color and the handling of the reflection in the pond that I could taste the water. I was intrigued by the dancing light created by the shadows of the trees in forest scenes by Diann Nelson, Mary Ann Ross, and Peg Luecke. I chose Peg's "Cuyahoga Path" for an award because of her creative mix of colors that took the shadows beyond black, giving them a life of their own. Robert R. Williams has an extraordinary handling of skin tones and expression in both of his pieces. I chose "Layla in Green Head Scarf" for the play of color in the background, as well as the model. His work is photorealistic, yet it is far richer than a photo. Bridget Marcus's "Crowned Crane from Flight Patterns' Series" is playful and exciting with pattern and color. Finally, I chose Barbara Gentner Stephenson's "Burgers in the Sky" for her incredible handling of the three people and all the tiny details. I was fascinated to see how she could squeeze in so many different colors and create accuracy of details in the scene with three smallish portraits. She uses a creative color mix throughout the piece, but especially on the skin tones. She makes a very common scene look uncommonly beautiful.

Some of the other pieces that stood out include Kari Stieglitz Black's "Me-Sketch" because of her creative handling of the shadows, especially from her glasses. I love the loose unfinished look of the shirt, too. Also, Megan Wright created a strong composition with her "Michigan Road Toll House." The house is beautifully rendered and kept taking my eye.

I was honored to be chosen to judge your artwork and hope you are encouraged by my selections and reasoning, and will continue to create wonderful works of art.

With respect and appreciation to members of Northern Indiana Pastel Society,

Barbara Miller
Penn High School, Mishawaka, Ind.
Indiana Art Teacher of the Year