

GALLERY STRATFORD

2009 Perth Huron Exhibition

Juror's Statement

Selecting a juried show is one of the most challenging tasks that an arts professional is asked to do. In an always too brief period of time, one must choose “the best” from a diverse group of artworks, often in an almost as diverse range of media. There are no hard and fast rules; one comes armed only with an understanding of composition and design; an appreciation of a wide range of styles and media; and a good eye for images that manage to communicate something more than the sum of their basic elements. Artists are creative people, the most successful of whom seem to delight in pushing the boundaries and breaking the rules and it is precisely the works of the artists who take risks and try something different that are often most exciting.

Jurying is also an invigorating task. The juror is confronted with an exciting range of artistic personalities, each with his or her own particular voice, each insistent on being heard. My approach is to look – carefully – at every submission, sometimes several times, before making any selection. There are always a few pieces that stand out – some that I find very appealing, some that I particularly dislike. In each case I need to know why. The answer may be the choice of colours; the composition; the quality of draftsmanship – but understanding my personal response to each piece is crucial. Once I know ‘why’, the piece that I personally dislike but that successfully communicates its message is as likely to be included in the show as is the piece that I want to take home with me. I also try to balance my analysis of the formal qualities of the artwork with an understanding of what the artist is trying to express. I have looked carefully and critically at each of the 95 pieces that were submitted for this show and made my selections based on my response to each work’s particular voice, on my analysis and understanding of that response and on how successful the artist is at communicating his or her message.

The overall quality of the work submitted was high, which is a pleasure to see, for it indicates a community of artists who are not afraid to push their media technically, emotionally and experimentally. I believe that the truly successful creation of a work of art involves some balance of these three factors and I congratulate those artists who have achieved that creative balance in their work; as anyone who has picked up a stick of conté or held a loaded paintbrush knows, there is both a fine line and a vast chasm between “success” and “almost”. It was exactly this willingness to take risks and bend or even break rules in order to push a vision beyond its expected logical conclusion that I recognized in the pieces that were included in the show, and I applaud all of you on your excellent work.

I would like to congratulate and encourage every artist who submitted work for this show. The juried process is not a kind one, but it is a time-honoured way for emerging artists and artists looking for critical feedback on new departures to have their work seen and I recognize the strength and commitment that went into each submission. I was pleased and honoured when Zhe Gu invited me to select this show and I would like to thank Zhe and Gallery Stratford for including me as part of this process.

Rhona Wenger

About the 2009 Juror: Rhona Wenger is a respected director, curator and writer from the Hamilton area. She is currently the Director and Curator of the Grimsby Public Art Gallery. She was previously the Director/Curator of the Art Gallery of Northumberland in Cobourg. She has worked at The Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery in Owen Sound as Assistant Curator/Registrar in addition to the Art Gallery of Peterborough. Ms. Wenger studied Art History and Classical Studies at Queen’s University in Kingston, receiving her B.A. Honours and her M.A. in Art History. In addition, she has a diploma in Arts Administration from Sir Sandford Fleming College in Peterborough.