

M REGIONAL 89th MICHIGAN REGIONAL EXHIBITION

MUSKEGON MUSEUM OF ART • SEP 28—NOV 8

JUROR'S STATEMENT



The Muskegon Museum of Art's Regional Exhibitions are a great way to see a statewide arts ecosystem. Selecting the 89th exhibition from the 691 entries was a respon-

sibility I thoroughly enjoyed. It was a delightful experience, and I want to thank Senior Curator Art Martin for organizing the jurying tasks so well.

At first glance, works of art attract my attention if they have a clear focus, evident skills, and a strong visual presence. Content that engages me is not necessarily the same subject that might draw in someone else. However, while some criteria can't be observed and measured with pure objectivity, focus, competence, and great composition present themselves readily and therefore must be evident.

When viewing so many artworks at one time, themes emerge. A surprisingly large number of photographers put their lenses to work this year, and it was a delight to see how many of them skillfully captured wonderful scenes with great sensitivity. Overall, there were few sculptural works in the mix, while many paintings, drawings, and watercolors focused on the natural habitat of Michigan. I certainly have a much better understanding of Michigan's natural beauty! The entries that stood out the most to me hovered between the abstract and figurative or were decidedly expressive in their use of gesture, material, or technique.

Best of Show winner **Donita Simpson's** photographic portraits capture artists in their personal worlds full of intriguing belongings.

David Bartlett's abstract photographs (Honorable Mention) of crumbling empty cells represent the opposite. Both the full presence of humans or the suggested absence is equally captivating to me. **Margaret Davis'** painting lingers beautifully on the teenage threshold of promise and loss, earning her a Third Place Award. **Karin Nelson's** understated painted doorway also refers to a coming or going, entry or exit. The abstract worlds of **Deborah Bowen's** painting (Second Place) and **Elizabeth Brandt's** textile work (Honorable Mention) depict places in which I can easily spend time; their quiet contemplative intimacy is simply seductive. **Armin Mersmann's** impressive graphite drawing and **Flynn Sochon's** reverent ceramic stoneware round out the group of juror awardees.

Many other works struck me and left me feeling inspired and privileged to be working in the arts. As with any juried exhibition, the final selection is a comparative affair, with a cut-off further determined by available space.

Life as a studio artist can be insular, and I truly want to thank all the artists for their courage to submit their artwork for consideration. It is a brave thing to do! Last, but not least, I hope that this *89th Regional Exhibition* offers an opportunity for everyone to be inspired and find renewed energy to return to the studio and to continue making art.

Petra Fallaux
Juror of the Muskegon Museum of Art
89th Michigan Regional Exhibition