

Illuminating Perspectives

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This year's online exhibition, *Illuminating Perspectives*, features work by twenty-one artists working in a wide variety of materials. These media range from the traditional – paintings in oil, acrylic, watercolor, and gouache (opaque watercolor) – to less traditional media. This year's first-, second-, and third-place winners are in the latter category: their media include hand-cut, reclaimed three-ring binder dividers; a natural-dyed, hand-woven wool tapestry; and digital imagery. The 21 works of art in the exhibition were chosen by a jury from 77 images submitted by artists from around the world.

The theme, *Illuminating Perspectives*, has been interpreted in a wide variety of ways. The most straightforward may be *Serendipitous Sunrise* by Susan Miiller, a beautifully executed painting in which a body of water is literally illuminated by golden light on the horizon. Another subject from nature is Nancy Wood's *San Antonio Botanical Blue*, a lush closeup of blue and green flowers and leaves. Where Miiller's oil painting on canvas was clearly painted by hand, Wood's botanical closeup is a digitally painted photograph on aluminum panel.

There are other types of landscapes in the exhibition. Miles Jordan's *504/907, Faith*, includes straightforward photographs of New Orleans, Louisiana and Fairbanks, Alaska. Jordan explores the similarities and differences between two locations in the United States that he considers distinct yet intertwined. He explores them through narratives expressed in the form of photographic diptychs. Rich Sheaffer's painting *Science ... Bah! Humbug!* encompasses two images of our entire planet and conveys a message about climate change.

A very different landscape, *Walking in Two Worlds*, is populated by what initially seem to be fantastic creatures and patterns. The original artwork, a four-by-six-foot mural in McKinnon, Australia, was created by students aged 13 to 17 in collaboration with artist-in-residence Aunty Heather Kennedy, a Trawlaway Plemiernier Bunurong community elder, and Jessica Rogosic and Peter Eglezos, members of the art faculty at McKinnon Secondary College. Creating the mural allowed the students to reflect on their own cultural roots as well as learn about the local indigenous community and Australia's history.

Other images in the exhibition illuminate the artist's personal perspective on the world or some small corner of it. Amy Broderick's *The Passion of Daedalus* uses forgotten photographs, discarded office supplies, and other ephemera to make images that evoke slivers of other peoples' daily lives. Daedalus, the father of Icarus, was a skillful architect and craftsman who is considered a symbol of wisdom and knowledge. Broderick's cut-away construction suggests Daedalus's craftsmanship; the use of 3-ring binders suggests academic knowledge; and the tabs on the binder folders might even be seen as the wings they created to escape imprisonment.

Susan Jane Britsch uses photography to capture items taken from her family's history as she ponders what happens to objects when they outlive those who loved them. In *Starshine*, an image featuring an old doll and buttons, she created a mysterious and intriguing moonlit scene that serves as a kind of meditation on the way personal belongings both reflect and transcend lives no longer present.

There are other paintings in the exhibition that can be considered illuminating from a religious or even political perspective. One of these, *Ukrainian Madonna: Birthing a New Ukraine* by Iryna Molodecky, looks like a traditional painting of the Madonna and Child. The artist states that the baby symbolizes the love Ukrainians have for their country and that the Madonna is birthing a new Ukraine. Another religious subject, *The Last Kali Priestess* by Joan Marie Kelly, depicts a woman standing at a shrine in a jungle setting. Kelly has been exploring the role of painting in diverse communities and disciplines. She cultivates connections between art, design, sociology, and ethnography in her creative work as well as in her teaching.

Abstract works of art are not always as abstract as they first appear. A geometric near-abstraction in the exhibition is actually a photograph that focuses closely on a set of stairs. Although Roger Sugden's *Steps of the Provincial Court of British Columbia, Kelowna* is quiet, geometric, and nearly abstract, it is part of a series about the tragic discovery of the remains of 215 children of the Syilx Okanagan People. Students at the Kamloops Indian Residential School, their deaths went unrecorded until recently.

One of the most abstract images in the exhibition is Michael Rohde's tapestry *Whispers: Dependable*, which was woven from wool dyed with natural materials. It may remind viewers of American quilts from a bygone era. The artist intended its patterns and colors to suggest a computer code, although he admits the pattern is a random one.

Another example is a symmetrical, computer-generated image by Patricia Search, *Creative Spirit Unveiled*, which suggests a view into a magical, abstract world of swirling, layered colors. The artist uses abstraction to explore the sensory and spiritual perspectives of non-Western cultures, creating images that juxtapose realism and fantasy, logic and emotion.

Petronio Bendito's *Color Code, Black, and White 01*, a colorful wire-like abstraction, represents the artist's research into computational color design, a process that produces sophisticated and expressive color palettes. These color studies bring to mind Josef Albers' more static color series titled *Homage to the Square*. K.E. Rajcic's semi-abstract *Playing with Pareidolia* can be seen as an experiment in image-making when we consider the definition of the word "pareidolia": a psychological phenomenon that causes people to see patterns or recognizable shapes in random or ambiguous visual stimuli like clouds.

Jeffrey Hartman's *The Transience of Memory*, a work that straddles the boundary between painting and graphic design, is composed of words. According to the artist, words and phrases have occasionally appeared in his paintings for over sixty years.

From top to bottom, the words “Lethe” and “Nepenthe” – meaning “forgetfulness” and “banishing pain” – grow progressively less clear. Words and the way they are rendered combine to create a message.

A very different category of images in the exhibition illuminates the personal and emotional perspective of the artist. Jaina Cipriano’s photograph *You Get to Make the Choice*, which features the artist surrounded by toys, is about the transformative power of internal exploration. Raised in a fundamentalist Christian cult, Cipriano played “pretend” a lot as a child. As an artist she says she now builds her own spaces, ones that reflect her inner state and make her feel safe.

Another photograph, Viviana Torres-Mestey’s *Red-Violet*, combines a personal message with a color study. This digital photomontage was inspired by the combination of red and violet colors; the artist considers red-violet a visual metaphor for the way humans navigate dualities. “We grapple with the choice of who to be and what to reveal,” she says. “We often present a curated persona on social media while keeping our true selves private.” Christopher Strickland’s abstract watercolor painting (*Untitled 3*) represents his creative and spiritual journey in the development of contemplative vision. According to the artist, contemplative vision can offer great meaning and holistic transformation of the heart and mind.

Ever since the Process Art movement of the 1960s, the methods of making art have become a creative interest for some artists. When creating *Alchemy*, Donna Isham started with an abstract painting. After using a process of photographic “scanning,” a platform called Unreal Engine, and layers of content generated through AI, the artist considered the result “a mixed-reality piece of art that blurs the lines between real and artificial, physical and digital.”

Another work in the exhibition, Mike Olson’s *Collective Journey*, also relies heavily on process. His piece involves a photocopy of a hand-drawn 18th century illustration that was “scan-bent” or distorted as it was dragged across a scanner. According to the artist, the resulting figures convey a narrative of evolving communication and collective movement, symbolizing transformation and progress.

Gyuzel Gadelshina’s *Co-Presence* is part of a series drawing on the artist’s experience teaching sustainability and her interest in the Japanese dance form called “Butoh,” which delves into profound human experiences. The figures in the painting are meant to express Butoh’s focus on introspection and environmental Integration. The artist advocates for collaborative and egalitarian sustainable practices that harmonize humans and nature.

As discussed above, the works of art in *Illuminating Perspectives* were made in a variety of media and styles. Their messages range from the personal to the political, the religious to the global. There are color studies and beautiful images of nature as well as works inspired by climate change and sustainability, personal growth and mental health, indigenous cultures and lost children.