

TIPS FOR EXHIBITION ENTRIES

*Taken from an exhibition email from Allen Clapp, (former) owner of 311 Gallery
January 2020*

If I may, I would like to share a few general comments with you that may help you in analyzing and choosing your best art for future shows. These comments are general and based upon my years of working with juried shows and serving as a juror. They may or may not apply to any piece that you entered in this show.

Often the difference between a piece that gets in and one that does not is subtle. One may have better composition, better flow of the eye through the work, more distinct focal point or points, more pleasing contrast, or better use of color, etc., than the other. Quite often, many of the items that do not get in are too busy, for lack of a better term. They have diminished clarity and definition. This can obscure or lessen eye movement through the work and/or perception of the focal point(s).

Another thing that some artists have trouble dealing with is relative values in paintings, because different colors may be perceived as being different values when, in fact, they are pretty much the same value. A trick I was taught in the 1960s was to squint my eyes until I could almost not see a painting. This would take out color and let me see relative light and dark. Today it is easy. Snap a photo and then use Photoshop or another tool to turn a color photo into grayscale (or just print it on a B/W printer), so you can see what is really light and dark. Even easier, many phone cameras allow looking at a photo in grayscale, so you can snap a photo as you work and don't even have to move it to a computer. Quite often, I find doing this helps me with a painting that just isn't working for me. I use my phone camera when I think I am getting close to finishing a painting. I find it amazing how often the simple trick of looking at the work in grayscale will help me make a better painting.

Many paintings suffer from having too much mid-tone and not enough of the more extreme light and dark. If you think about nature, you rarely see anything as balanced. It tends to lean one way or another. The same is often the case with great paintings. They are skewed somewhat (or even a lot) toward the light side or dark side and, if in color, are skewed toward the cool side or warm side, with accents in the other. The tails of the distributions can be important. Just having that little bit of really light and really dark, and that little bit of really cool and really warm color, properly placed can make an ordinary painting come alive. It can help with leading the eye to the focal point(s).

A couple of other things. All too often artists fail to read the prospectus. We always seem to get paintings that are too large entered and they have to be declined. Our size limits are real. If we allow items that are too large, then we have to decline many other deserving items for lack of space. Galleries choose size limits carefully to allow presentation of the best shows practical.

We usually allow two photos of 3-D items but only one photo of 2-D items and, as a consequence, we have to allow a max of 6 photos to be uploaded. We always seem to get some entrants who upload 6 individual 2-D entries because they don't read the well-

stated limit of 3 entries. That makes work for all of us to figure out what they want to keep. Some galleries will reject all of an artist's entries if they upload too many, so it pays to read the prospectus several times looking for limits on size, number of entries, subjects, etc. Otherwise, you are wasting your money in entering. Don't enter a rectangular painting if the requirements limit the entries to square items, etc. We try to communicate with artists that enter too many items; if we get no response, we have no choice but to allow the first 3 to be considered and withdraw the extras.

If you enter a rectangular work, don't send a square photo that either cuts off part of it or scrunches it down. All too often, such an entry will be rejected because it cannot be easily juried.

Don't show dimensions that are not what you intend to send if chosen. All too often photographers will show large dimensions when they will only send a small print, or vice versa. That usually means that we didn't invite a work that we actually would have room to present. That isn't fair to the next piece in the ratings line. We have rejected photos that were listed as being of a size larger than allowed only to find that the artist intended to print it smaller. Likewise, we have rejected items after they arrived that did not conform to the show restrictions. NOTE: some photographers upload to CAFÉ only the largest size that they will print a photograph to keep within CAFÉ's limits on number of items in your file area. As a result, we may see that you entered something larger than the show limits. If you have this issue, it behooves you to email the gallery, explain the issue, and provide the gallery with the real dimensions of the piece that you would send (i.e., let them know you read the prospectus and hopefully keep them from tossing your entry as oversized).

Often with photography, we have found that jurors were really looking forward to particular pieces of work, based upon the photos uploaded, only to find when they arrive that they were printed too big or on the wrong substrate or something else that took them out of the running for an award. The fact that a photograph is large or small will not usually figure into the awards process, but printing it so big that it becomes relatively pixilated can take it out of the running. Sometimes the same can be said for a painting; it can sometimes be too large or small relative to the detail presented. We have also seen too many cases where an inappropriate frame was used (too ornate, too colorful, or something else that took away from the overall presentation of the work).

One last issue. If you present matted works under glazing, think carefully before you use actual glass. In most cases, acrylic glazing is much better because it doesn't break like glass and, being lighter, is less expensive to ship. Almost every show, someone send a piece under glass that was not properly packed and protected and broke during shipping. About 80% of the time, the broken glass rattling around during shipping movement damages the artwork beneath.

Thank you again for entering. We hope that you will consider us again for a future show.

Allen Clapp, Owner
311 Gallery