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The Pastel 100 competition, now in its 10th year, is an annual showcase of 100 exceptional pastel paintings. Turn the page to discover this year's award winners.

Year
Anniversary

10th Annual Pastel 100 Competition



DESMOND O'HAGAN • JUROR

Well-known artist Desmond O'Hagan (www.desmendoohan.com) searches for originality in subject matter—as well as sound structure, exciting design and harmonious color within a painting—in order to create fresh and spontaneous art. These same criteria influenced his choices for the award-winning works within the Portrait & Figure category. “An important guideline for me is immediate impact,” he says. “These are paintings that quickly catch your attention and deserve a second and third look. I then follow by examining technical skill, color choice and style.”

O'Hagan's own fine art career has included several one-man shows and group exhibitions across the

United States, Japan, China and France. He's a signature member of the Pastel Society of America, a member of the International Association of Pastel Societies' (IAPS) Master Circle, and has received a number of other honors, including the Mrs. Pearl Kalkreuth Award, Hudson Valley Art Association Award, the Connecticut Pastel Society Award, the George Innes, Jr. Memorial Award from the Salzgarden Club and the Prix de Pastel Award at the 1999 IAPS Exhibition. The artist's work is represented by galleries in Denver and Evergreen, Colo.; Santa Fe, N.M.; and Huntsville, Utah.

His advice for future Pastel 100 competition contestants? “Paint what excites you, and that enthusiasm will translate to the viewer.”



Speltz Reiff, *Soft Substantiel, Speltz (24x32)*

FIRST PLACE **Teresa DeSeve**

"Intermission is about the moment when the music stops and you're not playing," explains Teresa DeSeve of Collogostville, Pa. "I think it speaks to a lot of women like me who have taken long breaks between being creative to do other things. Until five years ago, I was the full-time caregiver to my mother, and I home-schooled my two sons. Although I studied at The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and earned a BFA in painting at Rosemont College, I had no time to really paint, except on vacations," she says. "That's part of why I became interested in pastels; they're the simplest and easiest medium to start and stop—to breakers to clean or paint to mix."

Once DeSeve returned to painting, she decided to turn out a pastel every day in order to hone her skills. "Of course, I thought every one I did was wonderful, though now I see how little I understood the medium. There were nice passages; however, it was the consistency of doing it, and revisiting work by artists like Sargent, Velasquez and Hopper, that began to refine my work." She has since won many awards, including the Pastel Society of America's Andrew Clifton Memorial Award in 2006 and honorable mentions in the Portrait & Figure category in the sixth annual Pastel 100 competition.

DeSeve's younger son served as the model for *Intermission*. "It was Nate sitting there, but the painting represents both of my sons, who are each gifted," says the artist. "I posed him in my darkened living room with a curtain behind him, and played around with different dramatic lighting effects. He naturally fell into that pose. I wanted to use the violin for its beauty." DeSeve used museum-grade Wallis paper, starting with light strokes of neutral-toned Nupastel to slowly refine the proportions of the figure. "I don't do a lot of preparation—once I find something, I go right into it. I plan the idea ahead of time, in this case tying the music to the creative flow," she says.

The artist began with the background, using Schmincke Serious Black, the "blackest black" she's found, and continued with the dark shapes within the figure, adding dark blues, greens and umbers, still using Nupastels, then built up the middle values. DeSeve used the white of the paper for her subject's shirt until she was about halfway in, and then added heavier layers of Ultramar, Schmincke's and Sennelier. She also went back in with Nupastels over the softer pastels. "Altogether there are maybe 10 to 15 layers," she says. "It creates some wonderful color nuances,



giving it a nice tapestry effect up close."

DeSeve has taught painting classes for three years, noting that she often recognizes her own struggles in those of her students. "They're so careful in the beginning stages, until that breakthrough comes," says the artist. "I teach all levels. We paint still life, landscape, use a model or go outside when the weather allows. I give them background information about different artists, looking at examples of their work and studying how they do things. You can't diminish the impact of the artists whose work you love."

Intermission
(42x24)

SECOND PLACE **Jian Wu**

"Most of my pastel portraits are done from life. You can see so many different colors on the skin. Both *Diane* and *The Soldier* [honorable mention, on page 60] were demonstrations," says Jian Wu, of Union City, Calif., referring to classes he taught at The Academy of Art University in San Francisco. "I've known my models for years, so I have a pretty good idea of the best angles and poses for each one in certain lighting." Because light defines the warm or cool tones of the painting, Wu pays close attention to lighting. "I position spotlights at the angle and location

where they'll reveal the details of a model's face and give the best reflection of highlights and shadows. If the angle is too straight-on, the flat light diminishes the drama and power of the piece. If a spotlight is set too close, the strong light will wash out a lot of facial details and colors. If it's set too far away, I'm not able to see the subtle color changes on my model's face."

Born and raised in China, Wu (www.pwotulio.net) had an aptitude for art that led to a degree from a prestigious college in Beijing. In 1987, he emigrated to the United States and subsequently took his Master of Fine Arts degree while teaching at The Academy of Art University. Wu remains a respected artist in both oils and pastels in his native country, where he has published several books.

He advises students to seek a solid, classical foundation for drawing and painting. "I believe that accurate proportions and structure of facial features should be step one; correct value allocation and warm and cool color reflection is step two. Focus point highlights and elaboration would be the key to step three, and overall adjustment is the finishing step four," says the artist.

Wu, who won first place in the Portrait & Figure category in last year's Pastel 100, prefers to paint on Rives BFK. "It holds layers of color and has nice texture. The cotton paper is thick, so you can easily feel and control the stroke pressure." His favorite pastels, Rembrandts, respond well to a soft touch or a bold approach on this paper. "One of the techniques I emphasize is the contrast between soft rendering and rough strokes," says Wu. "I often set a softly rendered portrait on a roughly sketched background, a detailed head drawing simplified by sketchy strokes in rich, bright colors. This is one way to make an expressive portrait painting, capturing the character of the model. I believe in putting my heart into my paintings. The soul of an artwork is creativity and expressiveness, not reproduction."



Diane (24x18)

THIRD PLACE **Cathy Locke**

Emotion is the motivating force in Cathy Locke's artwork. "The figures in my paintings appear to be in a timeless void, inspired by the Buddhist concept of no beginning and no end. I create a landscape that holds an emotion that's timeless. The figures become one with their environment. I'm searching for a special moment so that the viewer isn't identifying with a certain individual, but an experience or a single feeling," she says.

My Landscape, which is part of her "Soul Landscapes" series, describes "the inner spiritual searching we all do. My influences are spiritual. I strive to translate these special feelings into poetry on the paper," she says.

It was while studying art in Russia in 2003 that Locke (www.cathylocke.com) experienced a paradigm shift from analytical to emotional painting. "I stood in front of paintings that I'd never seen before. Since I had no intellectual data for these paintings, I wasn't able to analyze them from the thinking part of my brain. Instead, for the first time, I read the paintings by feeling them. This planted a small seed inside me, which changed the way I now go about creating art," says Locke.

After completing her MFA at The Academy of Art University in San Francisco, Locke settled in a tiny enclave in California's wine country, near Novato, where she currently teaches private lessons.

For a surface, Locke has Wallis paper dry-mounted to smooth plywood so that she can wet it without danger of it buckling or bowing. "Since I start with acrylic washes, the paper gets really wet. The emotional concept of not being able to control a situation is all part of my painting process, so I often let the acrylic washes run down the paper," she says. "I work from motion, usually starting first with the elements that move least, then moving to the ones with the most movement. I describe light in my paintings through a strong color and value theme, building layers to create depth and mood."

The artist will sometimes tape old brush handles to her palette, then close her eyes and literally begin to "dance" the pastel onto the paper. "I want to feel the emotion in my body," she says. "The painting becomes about how I go about expressing it. As the pastel dances across the paper, that feeling is conveyed. When painting, I often explode with energy all over my studio. It's like being an orchestra conductor of energy and movement."



My Landscape (40x30)

FOURTH PLACE **Ilene Gienger-Stanfield**

Fetky
(24x19)

"It's said we have seven universal emotions, and 93 percent of them are conveyed through our body language," says Ilene Gienger-Stanfield, of Medford, Ore. "I like this communication. The figure is so expressive, and we love to look at ourselves."

Gienger-Stanfield (www.ilenejungers.com) considers working from life essential to her process, but works both from models and photos. "Painting from life is fun because it's limited in time and has elements of change, so I can't become fussy. A rhythm develops that carries on to my photo references," she says. "It gives me information a photo can't, such as accurate color, yet photos give me quiet time in my studio and lots of reference material."

The artist met the model for *Fetky* at a figure drawing session. She liked her edgy contemporary look, and arranged to set up a photo shoot inside a local boutique. "She dove right into those clothes and shoots like a natural. She was off in her own world. The clunky shoes she wore were frustrating on the cake," says Gienger-Stanfield.

See Gienger-Stanfield's honorable mention on opposite page.

FIFTH PLACE **William A. Schneider**

"I believe that art is a language system," says William A. Schneider of Lakewood, Ill. "I'm trying to convey what I see and feel about the subject as honestly as



In Morocco
(17x15)

I can. I'm particularly drawn to a graceful gesture or subtle expression."

For his portrait, *In Morocco*, Schneider (<http://schneiderart.com>) worked alla prima to capture the moment, first rubbing the general skin colors into Watts sanded paper with the heel of his hand and then measuring the proportions as he located the features in charcoal. "I work to identify the lightest light, darkest dark, sharpest edge and most intense color, and indicate them with marks. This defines the box in which I work," he says. "Since most of the model's face was in shadow, I placed my detail there and simplified the light areas."

Working the foreground and background areas simultaneously, Schneider integrated both, paying special attention to those places where light and color bounced into an area. "For example, I added cool highlights on his right cheek and the warm halation where the reflected light from his headress lit up the surrounding air." □

Deborah Secor (www.deborahsecor.com) is an artist, panel instructor and writer. View clips of her online video workshops at www.artistsonetv.com.