

AMERICA'S PARKS I

JURORS' STATEMENTS

One of the great joys of helping to judge an art competition is being able to see how highly creative people interpret a common theme. That was certainly the case with this exhibition as the artists who submitted images offered their unique interpretation of the subject, "America's Parks Through the Beauty of Art." Some of them offered intimate landscapes and botanical illustrations of nature's smallest and most contemplative subjects, while others submitted expansive views of national parks and sprawling urban respites. That variety made the judging process more difficult, but also more rewarding.

I was also pleased to see that the competition attracted entries from artists who were less experienced in handling paint as well as those who are acknowledged masters of their craft. That means the subject of the competition had a broad appeal and inspired artists of all levels of ability and experience. Ultimately, an exhibition with this theme should inspire artists and observers to consider the beauty and importance of parks, and I think the entries I reviewed certainly provide that has already happened.

M. Stephen Doherty, Editor, *PleinAir*TM Magazine

Artist's can easily be credited with the idea of creating our national parks. Catlin, Bierstadt, and Moran were among those notable painters who expressed their artistic visions of the majesty they saw and then presented their paintings to an eager public, ready to see the vastness, the curiosities, and the beauty of nature. All of the artists who participated in this exhibit continue this tradition, showing us places we may never actually visit; challenging us to think about aspects that had not occurred to us and encouraging us to explore how we feel about America's Parks and the wildlife that thrives within their boundaries.

The paintings in this exhibit were juried from a worthy collection of talented artists. Consistently high-grade entries made the choices difficult. Knowing that many would be eliminated sharpened my careful scrutiny of the entries. The benefit of this process for me was the time I spent looking at and enjoying many fine artworks in an array of media.

Works were presented in watercolor, oils, gouache, acrylics, pen and ink, scratchboard, pastels and textile works. I began with an overview of every entry. This first glance gave me the opportunity to see each piece, on its own, withholding judgment. The next round began a process of elimination. I juried in sessions lasting approximately 40 minutes to avoid attention fatigue. The next several viewings refined the selections further and continued over several days until I had the required number of entries for the exhibit. I looked for a high degree of artistic handling and competence in the media as well as unusual, better yet - unique expression of time and place. I like intriguing composition; an articulate use of color; and courageous personal expression. These are all hallmark qualities that enhance our perspective and broaden our view for places that are now a part of our national psyche.

This exhibit is more than just a walk in the park, it is an invigorating exercise in appreciation of America's Parks Through the Beauty of Art.

Susan T. Fisher, Past President American Society of Botanical Artists
and former Director, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Art Institute