

May 18th, 2014

To: Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

From: Professor Linda Bourassa, Gelbke Fine Art Center, Hiram College. Juror for 2016.

Re: Photography Contest 2016

Juror's Statement:

It's been an honor to be asked to juror this year's photography contest. "Birds" was the most challenging category as it had the most submissions and some really excellent work to choose from. It was helpful to be assigned a rubric for technical, originality, and artistic merit. Artistry was weighted a bit more which I appreciated as a fine art photographer myself. Judging Fine Art and Landscape was very intuitive for me and I wish there had been even more in these categories. With a DVD of selections it was not possible to reorient the format from Landscape to Portrait and some work would have benefitted from it. Also, there was an image with a time and date stamp! (Turn that off folks!) Being a good sport, I ignored both of those issues and give you warning in case next year you get a less indulgent judge!

From most images I discerned what you love about birds and nature. That might be the amazing shapes, colors, textures, expressions and situations to be witnessed and captured with a lens. Technical strength included exposures that captured the details of feathers, talons, and beaks; shutter speeds that arrested or expressed motion; depth of field that led the eye to the correct focal point in the composition. Originality was given for that something new I may have not seen before or considered. Artistic merit was for the coming together of all elements to create an arresting visual "decisive moment" and some idea about the subject formed by action of light, gesture, and other formal elements. The best work goes beyond being illustration to create for the viewer a world that inspires and uplifts. This is not the goal of most contemporary forms of art. Nature photography tends to hearken back to the Modernist and Romantic eras of the 20th and 19th century. I see no post-modern work here...although a case could be made for the laughing duck or the frog about to be devoured! Don't be discouraged if you did not receive an award this year. Going about with a camera and curiosity is reward in itself. I share your love of nature and photography and hope you will continue to brave the wild in search of that next great image and magical encounter with life.