

BEST OF THE BEST SHOW 2026

JUDGE: ERIN FRANKLIN

BEST OF SHOW: Darlene Hoekstra “*The Lake District*” Oil

Comments: This landscape of a pastoral countryside stood out for its masterful execution of atmospheric perspective. The rich, green palette of the patchwork fields against the soft, luminous cloudscape are an exploration of light and its effects on color. The application of contrasts—the deep shades of green against the soft hues of the sky, the tangible nature of the grazing sheep in the foreground and the ephemeral nature of the moving clouds—ultimately unifies the scene to create a sensation of harmony and balance.

FIRST PLACE: Brad Purse “*Fun With the Moai of Easter Island*” Oil

Comments: Evoking the Surrealist style, this piece uses bold, saturated color and dynamic patterns to guide the viewer’s eye through this original and witty scene. The artist transforms the mysterious, ancient statues of Easter Island into objects of theatricality and humor, creating a scene that is both dreamlike and subversive. The ancient, spiritual mystery is taken over by a more immediate and pressing one, whose clues (the discarded paint cans and ladder) are left to the viewer to decipher.

SECOND PLACE: Bruce Webber “*Flaming Head*” Bronze

Comments: Masterfully sculpted in bronze, this piece emanates a pulsing energy through the interplay of elements: organic versus geometric shapes, positive versus negative space, and sharp line versus the curve of the profile. This tension creates a heightened sense of conflict between the warrior facade and the human behind it, exposing a vulnerability and humanity behind this fiery symbol of power.

THIRD PLACE: Dorothy Bury Shaw “*In Your Eyes*” mixed media

Comments: This kaleidoscopic piece commands the eyes of the viewer through its meticulous layering of textures and repetition of intricate patterns and form. The circular composition of these elements creates a visual sensation of a piece of music that is at once intimate, epic and universal.

HONORABLE MENTION:

Kim Laurel “*Indigo Cherry Blossom Sode Kite*” mixed media

Tom Finn “*Basket of Gold*” scratchboard and watercolor

Debbie Birhanu “*Autumn Leaves*” colored pencil

Dan Danielson “*BFF*” watercolor