

MSAA Jury Remarks 2012

From the Design Juror-

Good variety, some great ideas and concepts but the photography could have been better on some of them. I always try to get my students to take the time (and take more photos than they think they need) to create the best photos to showcase their work. I find that showing them lighting techniques, etc. helps. I appreciated the variety of work/materials and was glad to see that it wasn't all created on a computer.

An area of improvement would be "finished" quality in the pieces I saw. Some were very close, one or two were "finished". Similar to my above statement, I'm always emphasizing "finished" quality and bringing work to a "complete" level. I believe that this is a constant issue all high school art/graphic design teachers are struggling with.

Some advice would be to continue exploring the use of different media. Variety keeps it interesting. Computer/digital is here to stay but we will always need a solid foundation in traditional art concepts/techniques. I like to see work that challenges me- specifically when I can't tell if it is traditional, digital or a combination.

Budget enough time to take great photos of work that cannot be scanned. Awesome work suffers if you can't see the details properly with a bad quality or poorly lit photo of a student's artwork.

For teachers: keep encouraging your students to enter competitions. Recognition from sources outside of the classroom is important and good for your students' self-esteem.

From the Jewelry Juror-

The number of jewelry submissions was very small, only 22. Perhaps the low numbers of jewelry submissions is because of the lack of jewelry studios in most schools?

There was strong skill evidenced in casting and stone setting. I was also happy to see several beaded submissions.

Overall the majority of submissions did not employ all three of the Scholastic criteria—skill/technique, personal voice and creativity. The works that exhibited the most originality did not display a high level of craftsmanship. The pieces exhibiting a high level of technical skill did not exhibit much personal voice or unique style.

In the future, I would encourage advanced jewelry students to push the creativity envelope and use their skill to create more personal, original works. I encourage students to produce more mixed media jewelry pieces such as use of wire, incorporating found objects and including narrative elements. I'd like to see more exploration of techniques beside just soldering, casting and beveled stone work. I would like to see more exploration of sawing and cold connections in the work submitted. These techniques do not require heat or elaborate equipment.

From the Ceramics and Glass Juror-

1. *What was successful overall in the entries you saw?*

I felt that most of the artists explored the capabilities of both themselves and their medium. They used both glaze and mastery of the clay itself to produce visually interesting pieces. Most of the students used function as a platform and expanded their vision from there.

2. *What consistently needed improvement in what you saw?*

I would say the only thing that needed improvement overall was perhaps more mastery of glazing technique. Although I was greatly impressed by the use of some of the glazes, some students' work seemed overglazed rather than underglazed, an aspect I find more often in my own students' pieces. But I was duly impressed with the exploration of resists, color, and the use of glaze to enhance rather than simply decorate a piece.

3. What advice do you have for students and teachers entering artwork in the MSAA?

Only one thing struck me- the more photos and views you provide your judges, the better off everyone involved will be! If I only had one view of a piece, I had to only imagine what the other side looked like, and wonder why it was not pictured. It was also a good lesson for me!

From the Middle School Juror-

□ What was successful in the overall entries you saw?

It always thrills me to see artwork, particularly that of young artists in their early teens. Your artwork is so spontaneous. Your energy is present in the work and, through practice you can only continue to improve. Seeing young artists' work contributes hugely to my faith and confidence in the future.

□ What consistently needed improvement in the artwork you saw?

Making is all process. Improvement is contingent on practice. Paying attention to the artwork that preceded the present piece, learning from the present piece, and looking toward the piece that will follow is the path for improvement.

□ What advice do you have for students and teachers entering artwork in the MSAA?

Risk showing your art to the world. That's how artists thrive, learn and grow. Make, make, make!

From the Digital Art Juror-

What was successful in the overall entries you saw?

The overall work was excellent in quality. The synthesis of originality, technical skill and artistic vision along with the application of the elements and principles of design was wonderfully executed. Higher level problem solving skills were evident in many of the pieces and showed informed risk-taking.

What advice do you have for students and teachers entering artwork in the MSAA?

Continue to reinforce that the brain is a muscle and hard work exercises this creative muscle. Once toned, this can produce inventive and engaging pieces for the viewer.

From the Mixed Media Juror-

What was successful in the overall entries you saw?

- Originality- work that USED material in a surprising way really stood out
- Craftsmanship and technical ability was strong
- Use/combo of traditional approaches and digital process

What consistently needed improvement in the artwork you saw?

- Some work seemed to be placed in the wrong category
- Some work appeared/still very tied to the assignment
- More professional approach to assignments with gender

What advice do you have for students and teachers entering artwork in the MASA?

- Documentation- high quality- overall shot and details
- More ambitious and surprising use of materials and process
- Incorporate non-art materials to expand boundaries and expectations of a mixed media category
- Push 3D and digital components

From the Photography Juror-

What was most “successful overall” were those images that I had a strong reaction to whether it was humor, or surprise or confusion, or even wondering how it was done. When it was obvious that the student had challenged the paradigm, looked at their world with fresh eyes, or come to some new and personal conclusion. It was, as always, the presence of a strong, yet uniquely individual point of view that resulted in the most interesting work.

As an “area of improvement” I would suggest really looking for those images that weren’t just successful solutions to an assignment. There were many images entered where it felt like I was seeing different versions/solutions to the same assignment. I think this is probably inevitable with this type of category, but it was something that I consistently noticed.

My advice for students and teachers is work, work, work. By this I mean, the more work the students produce, the more work they will have to edit when it comes time to submit their pieces. My experiences in the classroom (and in life) have taught me that the best work usually come from the most unexpected places and circumstances. Assignments are important for learning the medium, but working all the time is important to get the artwork.

Overall, I really had fun and enjoyed the opportunity to see what students are doing with photography in Minnesota.

From a Portfolio Juror-**What was successful in the overall entries you saw?**

- There were quite a few portfolios that seemed to show a developing style and a body of work that went beyond the “assignment”
- -Many were presented very professionally!

What consistently needed improvement in the artwork you saw?

- There were portfolios that started out awesome and then the last couple not so much... this really makes a bad impression on the jury and makes it harder to move a portfolio to the medal round.

What advice do you have for students and teachers entering artwork in the MSAA?

- Make sure photos are scanned in and not photographed. Many had glare.
- Drawing eyes and faces are so common. You really have to do something super original and beyond just skill to be considered.

From a Portfolio Juror-**What was successful in the overall entries you saw?**

There was a lot of innovation and conceptualization. Several times I couldn’t believe we were looking at high school level work. In general many of the submissions were thoughtful and creative. Many of the applicants will make great additions whichever artistic community they choose.

What consistently needed improvement in the artwork you saw?

White Balance on the images. Do not photograph photographs. When documenting flat work make sure the perspective is correct so it doesn't distort the work.
No travel photographs.

What advice do you have for students and teachers entering artwork in the MSAA?

Very often the portfolios felt strong until we got to the last few, and sometimes the quality was so different that the entire portfolio had to be reconsidered. Titles were more often distracting than helpful, consider simpler or descriptive titles.

Good documentation goes a long way. I know we were instructed to look past it, but well-lit and sharp images make a difference.

From a Portfolio Juror-

What was successful in the overall entries you saw?

- Overall, the entries demonstrated a number of skill-sets, which evoked competency in many areas: drawing, painting, animation, ceramics, etc. It is wonderful to see the kind of teaching and subsequent resources that high school students have access too- well done!
- Documentation of student work was well done, making for a very transparent jurying process.

What consistently needed improvement in the artwork you saw?

- In order to compete for nationals: Portfolios need to be strong throughout. Many portfolios has some strong work but were often accompanied with work that was unresolved or very inconsistent w/ the rest of the work. You need 8 high quality works of art to have a strong portfolio.
- Continued development of a personal visual language
- A consistency in depth of movement with the work both conceptually and technically

What advice do you have for students and teachers entering artwork in the MSAA?

- Students: Work hard to develop a series of strong work- you want to be in a position of editing work for the competition rather than scrambling to include or come up with 8 works.
- Faculty: Encourage students to develop a body of work (theme) that pervades the portfolio. Many portfolios had strong pieces but also included some very assignment based- or work of much lesser quality- decreasing the portfolios chances to compete on a national stage.