

**Comments on First Place Winners from Members' Show
Stacey and George Sass**

Acrylics: *Dappled Strangler* by Monica Bankowski

This small piece is an absolute gem. The artist depicts a keen observation of afternoon light that makes the image sparkle. Bold positive /negative shapes define the subject yet subtle layering of warm and cool colors create an energy that is punctuated by sinuous, rhythmic lines.

Oils: *What Was I Thinking* by Carol Ubben

This is a piece that makes the observer stop-in-their-tracks, intrigued by the variety of seemingly incongruous still life subjects and the painting's creative title. It makes one think back to the 17th century Flemish still life paintings that were full of hidden symbolism and the works of 20th c. photorealist Audrey Flack. A true mastery of the medium is evident in the artist's brush control shown in the velvety gradations of paint and the exquisite control of edges.

Plein Air: *Sunrise Beach Camping* by David Bader

This is a painting that makes you want to smile but still exhibits a sophisticated level of compositional planning and a mastery of technique. The warm underpainting "peaks out" from the green local color and unites the red camper to the background. The immediacy of plein air painting is evident in the energetic brushwork and overall "alive" feeling. You know that the artist was taking in the scene using all of his senses.

Water Media: *It's a Manatee World* by Mary Ellen Cassata-Holler

Who doesn't love a manatee? This is a happy painting, handled with a high level of skill. The artist brought an immediacy to the imagery by the close cropping, inviting the viewer to experience this underwater scene. There is a masterful layering of watercolor paint in various wet and dry techniques which accentuates the translucent quality of the media.

Mixed Media: *Flower Girls of Havana* by Diane Smith

This is a piece that pulls you in from a distance and then once you are close, the observer discovers delightful subtle details. Batik is a difficult medium to control but this artist depicts accurate linear perspective and juxtaposed it against whimsical, rhythmic figures. The bits of blue from the batik process add unity to a complex composition.

Ink, Pencil and Pastel: *Waterscape* by John David Hawver

The mesmerizing depiction of water ripples invites the viewer to dive into this piece. These shapes are created in pastel by the subtle overlapping of colors and values and a deft application of a difficult medium.

Digital Art, Photography: *Golden Everglades* by Kelly Walkotten

When an aspiring photographer asked a famous National Geographic photographer, "How can I take better photos?" He responded, "It's simple. You just have to stand in front of more interesting places." Well this artist chose an incredibly interesting place, the Florida Everglades. And she chose to be there at first light before the fog lifted. But she didn't stop there. She waited for a magical moment when two white swans flew across the bottom of her frame. And finally, she was able to capture the scene's challenging dynamic range by bringing out the details in the shadows while not blowing out the bright highlights of the swans or rising sun. A real show stopper.

Best in Show: *High Tide* by Jacqueline Campa

This is a quintessential painting of what makes the landscape here in the Keyes wonderful. It depicts the essence of this area's beauty through a masterful command of art principles and the confident application of paint. Blocked-in shapes define subject while warm and cool colors add variety yet unity. The energetic brushwork adds liveliness and rhythm to the overall feeling in the painting.

Comments from George Sass:

As a photographer I'm cautious not to create over saturated images. That's why I'm sometimes jealous of painters who are able to use such vibrant colors to create exciting landscapes. What also intrigues me in this piece is its layering starting with the foreground leading to the vertical graphic of the trees through which the eye seeks even more surprising colors of the water and the sky. One's eye never seems to stop looking for more.