WHS Newsletter Autumn 2017

The State of Watercolor *by WHS President, Laurin McCracken*

The Good News

Watercolor painting is alive and well, in the US and around the globe. Even as governments; local, state and federal, continue to spend less and less on art education and the support of the fine arts, the numbers of people taking up watercolor is growing. The antidotal evidence from art materials bears this out. Their sales continue to grow here and around the world.

Part of the reason for this growth in the US is the basic demographics of our population. As the baby boomers have aged and their children have left the nest they have more free time to pursue activities for which they did not earlier have the time. The other reason is that watercolor, while a challenging medium for the serious painters, is the least inexpensive and most available art medium. The basic costs to entry is relatively low compared to other mediums.

The prospects for future growth in the field of watercolor in the US is strong. The generations coming behind the Baby Boomers, the Gen X and Millennial generations, are larger than that generation and they will have more disposable income to spend on activities.

The average age in which most Americans take up watercolor appears to be 55. With our extended life spans this bodes well for the future of watercolor. However, there continues to be the need to engage the younger members of these generations in our chosen art medium.

We will have to overcome the fact that few, if any, high schools, colleges and universities offer any courses in watercolor. We all need support these institutions by volunteering to give talks, providing demonstrations and general assistance to all art programs about watercolor.

In my discussions with the companies that produce art materials for watercolor, I encourage them to focus part of their marketing dollar on a younger audience while maintaining a strong link to those over 55 who want to learn about watercolor.

Watercolor societies and related art guilds, art associations and

INSIDE:

President's Message - 1

Watercolor USA 2017 - 4

"From the Studio" with Brenda Benson - 6

Awards of Excellence - 7

"From the Studio" with Cynthia Kukla - 8

Memorials - 10

Member News - 11

Membership renewal form - 12

related art groups are growing. Every day and evening across the country there are watercolorists who come together to paint, watch demos, share information and learn about watercolor. There are over 100 watercolor societies in the US. There are also hundreds of regional and local art groups that meet regularly and support watercolorist and other artists.

The Bad News

Most watercolor societies and related organizations need more participation in the leadership of these organizations. The Mississippi Watercolor Society, a state organization with a highly acclaimed annual competitive exhibition and a strong membership around the state was disbanded because it could not get enough participants to fill the basic board seats.

This is a story I hear repeated across the country. The lack of members of organizations stepping up to help move the organization forward. Many of those that are in leadership positions in these art organizations have been in their positions for many years and are ready to hand their workload and knowledge off to the next generation of leaders, but few, if any, are stepping up and answering the call.

Recently, I was talking with the officers of an art guild in central Texas. They told me that their bylaws stated that a person could only serve two, two-year terms in a board position, but many of them had been in their board position for 6 and 8 years because no one else was stepping up. This is not an unusual situation.

WHS

The Watercolor Honor Society USA, with its partnership with the Springfield Art Museum, continues to be force in the promotion of innovative and inspiring watercolor. Central to our mission is to bring more talented watercolorist into the field and to promote the best of what they create. This, in turn, will encourage others to pick up a brush and join us.

We, like most organizations, need a few people to step forward and join our board to help us continue to achieve these goals.

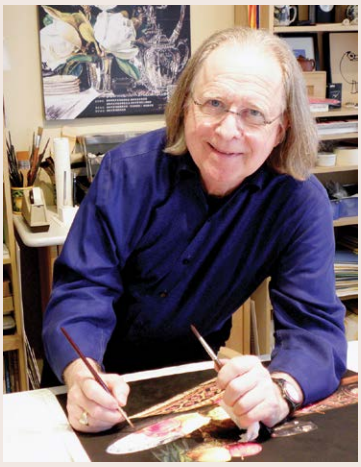
While there are a growing number of people that want to learn about watercolor and express their talent through this wonderful and challenging medium, we need more active participation at the board level if we are to meet the needs of the people that want to join this field of art.

Please let me, or one of the board members, know if you are willing to take a seat on our board or if you willing to sit on a committee focused on a specific activity such as Watercolor NOW. I can be reached at Laurinmc@aol.com.

Watch for the article in an upcoming issue of Watercolor Artists magazine about Watercolor Society Exhibitions. One of our award winners from this year's Watercolor USA will be included in that article.

Wishing you all the best,

*- **Laurin McCracken AWS NWS WHS***
President, Watercolor USA Honor Society



Laurin McCracken,
WHS President

A Message from the Editor *Chris Buth-Furness, Newsletter Editor*

Being the WHS Newsletter Editor has been a great deal of fun for me and in the fall of 2018 I will turn the newsletter over to a new editor. My energies and volunteer efforts for the organization will go to "Watercolor NOW." Watercolor NOW is a WHS non-juried member exhibit held in the U.S. to feature the work of its members. Here's a link to the history of this important exhibit — http://www.watercolorusa-honorsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/WHS-HX-1985-2015.pdf

If you are interested in being the next Newsletter Editor, serving on a subcommittee to plan the next Watercolor NOW exhibition, or serving on the board of WHS in some other capacity, please contact our President, Laurin McCracken at laurinmc@aol.com

If you have 2017-2018 news about your solo or two person shows, awards won, or exhibitions you have juried, please send details to me at chrisbuthfurn@gmail.com. ***Deadline to send: March 31, 2018***

Be safe, be well, and enjoy many days painting!

Christine Buth-Furness
WHS Newsletter Editor
chrisbuthfurn@gmail.com

Welcome to new WHS members for 2017

Ingrid Albrecht	Rachel Wood	Kirby Attwell	Brenda Benson
Steven Henry	Charles Novich	Barbare Rohde	John Wilkison
Gary Cadwallader	Diana Burchfield	Dashuai Sun	

"Brush up" your work and plan to enter...

WATERCOLOR USA 2018

Opening reception: June 1, 2018. Show opens: June 2, 2018

Hosted at the Springfield Art Museum, Springfield, MO

Details and prospectus will be available on the Springfield Art Museum site:

www.sgfmuseum.org

- **Registration opens: Jan. 4, 2018**
- **Entry deadline: March 6, 2018**
- **Two (2) entries per person.**
- **All entries must be made online (just like last year)**
- **For member discount code: enter "WHS30"**

The Juror for Watercolor USA 2018 will be Kelly Kane. She has been a leader in art publishing for more than 20 years, the last 13 as Editor-in-Chief of Watercolor Artist magazine. She also served formerly as Content Director for The Artist's Magazine, Drawing, Acrylic Artist and Pastel Journal. She has interviewed many of the preeminent artists of our time and has written numerous articles about painting, drawing, art education, and art history. She frequently serves as a speaker and juror.

Watercolor USA 2017 Review *by Dorothy Joiner*

Watercolor USA 2017 was held June 3 through August 27, 2017 at The City of Springfield Art Museum in Springfield, Missouri. Deftly juried by Laurin McCracken, President of the Watercolor U.S.A. Honor Society, the 2017 annual exhibition continues a laudable tradition, showcasing the best and most innovative recent watercolor art from around the country. This year's contest attracted 420 entries by 241 artists from 42 states. Of these, McCracken accepted 85 works by 80 artists, from 32 states. Terming the show "a master's course in the range of art that can be created using watercolor," McCracken underscored the excellence of all the works on display. "All artists selected for the exhibition should consider themselves a winner," He wrote. In assigning awards, however, he "honored the innovative use" of the medium, together with "the boldness of the subject matter . . . technical assurance . . . and power of composition." For the viewer, moreover, the exhibition evokes a range of moods from sanguine to sober.

1) *Purely Spectral* - Brenda Benson. (See larger images of her work on page 6)

McCracken called attention to four particularly noteworthy pieces. The first of these, Brenda Benson's Purely Spectral (2016)[1], projects a three-dimensional exuberance, splashing a myriad parti-colored curlicues cut from painted paper—blue, lavender, peach, aqua, green—onto a grid. The multifarious cut-outs teasingly overlap the edges, their prodigality refusing to be contained. "The shapes," McCracken observes, "leap off the page in their effort to provide beauty and happiness to the viewer."

2) *Flying HIgh* - Steven Henry

A second joy-filled work that McCracken noted, Steven Henry's Flying High (2016)[2], recalls Fragonard's The Swing, the celebrated Rococo painting of a coquettish damsel in fluffy pink kicking off her shoe toward an admirer hidden in the bushes. Whereas the 18th-century painter emphasized playful eroticism, Henry, on the other hand, focuses on a youngster's euphoria at the apex of her swing upward, eyes closed, hair wafting in the breeze.

In an antithetical, far from exuberant spirit, Bruce Bobick's Litany VI, the Departed (2016)[3] takes its title from a traditional prayer consisting of invocations recited by a leader alternating with reiterated responses by a group. By adding a reference to death, however, the artist creates rather a "requiem," that is, a hymn for the deceased. Reinforcing the funereal associations, a dark gray rectangle overlaps at a slight angle another more colorful painting underneath, as though death has "covered" life. Details bring to mind opposing connotations of judgment and salvation. Shark's teeth suggest pain, even torture; snakes and frogs intimate evil; a metal scraper refers perhaps to the soul's need for purification; and religious metals, together with a pilgrim's pouch, symbolize those journeys undertaken by penitents in search of redemption or healing. The artist seems to ponder: what happens after death?

5) *Stone Lagoon School* - Charlene Gerrish

The fourth work McCracken cites, Howard Eberle's

3) *Litany VI, The Departed* - Bruce Bobick

Skiff (2016)[4], displays a mastery of design and technique. The stark setting of a weathered rowboat, foreshortened from the aft against a neutral gray ground, calls attention to the satisfying symmetry of the vessel's shape, its off-white and gray coloration, as well as the subtle shadows cast near the bow. Radically simplified, the painting also brings to mind the millennial archetypal meanings of the boat. In most cultures, there is a mythic boat of the dead in which souls are ferried to a life beyond; and the boat is often seen as a symbol of security, as in the Christian tradition, where the Church is the bark transporting the faithful through the perils of this life toward heaven.

6) *DIY* - Denny Bond.
(See a larger image on page 7)

Other works in the exhibition also merit commentary, as, for example, Charlene Gerrish's Stone Lagoon School (2016)[5], a view through the window of a one-room school house in Trinidad, California, along the northern coast. In operation from 1893 until 1958 the old-fashioned school room evokes nostalgia for the simpler ways of the past, feelings intensified by the brilliant light that streams through the tall windows and falls on the desks in the center, lending an almost religious quality to the space.

Also noteworthy is Denny Bond's DIY (2017)[6], a self-portrait in building blocks, as it were. Fragments of the artist's image are painted on "blocks" set a various angles to the plane, as though to be "assembled" – hence the title: an acrostic of "do it yourself." One of these fragments reveals a middle-aged man ruminating about the passage of time. His hair is graying at the temples; his beard is stubbly; he holds reading glasses; the colors are somber; and fragmentary clocks underscore the reason for his pensiveness.

4) *Skiff* - Howard Eberle

Equally thought-provoking, Richard Hanson's Last Tango (Street Series) (2017)[7] shows an elderly man slouched in a vintage arm chair, looking toward the left—always the side of menace—toward an unseen intruder. The cluttered space and shabby clothing underscore his less than ideal, marginalized existence.

7) *Last Tango (Street Series)* - Richard Hanson

Unnerved by possible danger, nonetheless, he holds a revolver, the weapon offering a shield of protection.

Once again the Museum of the City of Springfield has hosted an admirable exhibition of the country's finest and most innovative works in watercolor. Building on a long tradition of excellence, the show offers a wide range of subject, technique, and emotional appeal.

1) $3,000 Cash-Kenneth M. Shuck Memorial Award
2) $1,000 Cash-Robert Goodier Memorial Award for Traditional Transparent Watercolor
3) $2,000 Cash-Greg G. Thielen Memorial Award
4) $1500 Cash-Bill Armstrong Memorial Award
5) $300 Barbara Maxwell Memorial Award
6) $300 Award of Excellence **7)** $300 Jerry Berneche Memorial Award

"From the Studio" *by Brenda Benson*

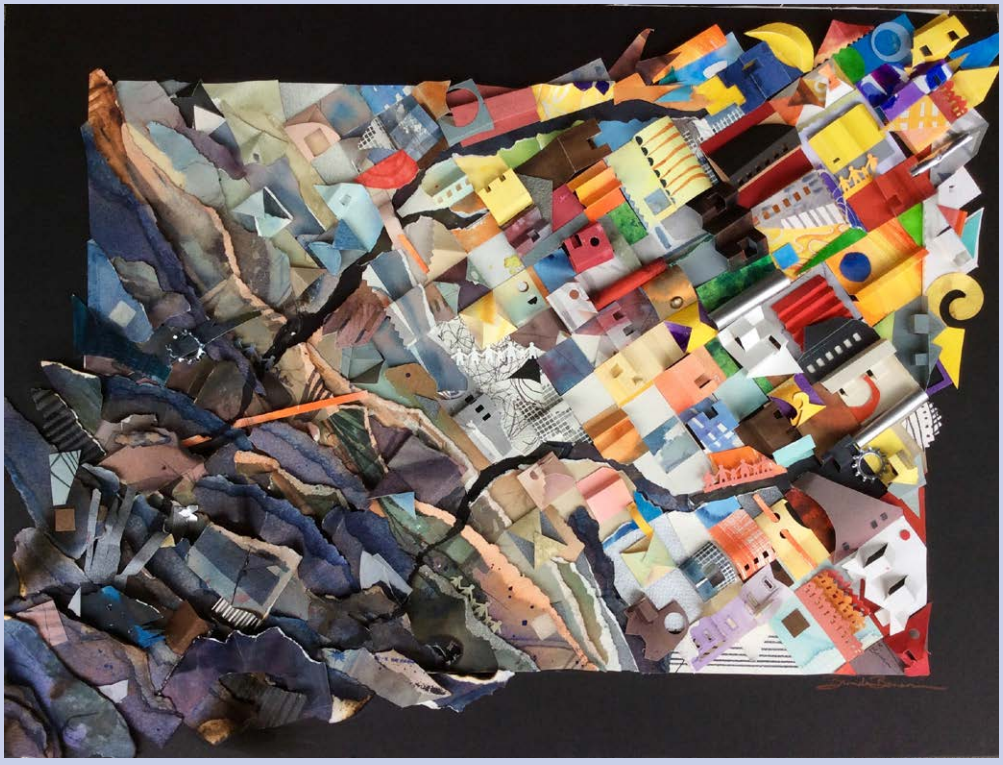
I have always loved watercolor since my first watercolor lesson with AWS member Fritzie Morrison at age 15. I love the transparency,freshness, fluidity, the element of chance, and the portability of the medium. But lately it's the papers that have claimed my attention. After painting the paper on both sides, I cut it up, fold it, cut it again, and essentially create relief paper sculptures from the painted papers.

Purely Spectral - Brenda Benson

Usually my work is abstract, such as "Purely Spectral" These pieces are a joy to create because they allow me to simply play with form, light and shadow, texture and color!

I do think about you, the viewer, and try to make a journey for the eye with surprises tucked into the composition. As strange as it sounds, Chihuly glass sculptures were an influence on this aspect of my work. His displays of whimsical form and color in garden settings are fun and beautiful with a surprise around every corner.

I think that if a human creates the work, there is always content. For me, some pieces express this more obviously such as in my other piece recognized by the judge, "From the Ashes". It speaks of rebuilding and renewal after devastation, be it fire or hurricane or earthquake. Or it can symbolize the person who rebuilds their life and recovers from devastating loss. I'm a bit awed by people and communities that have done that.



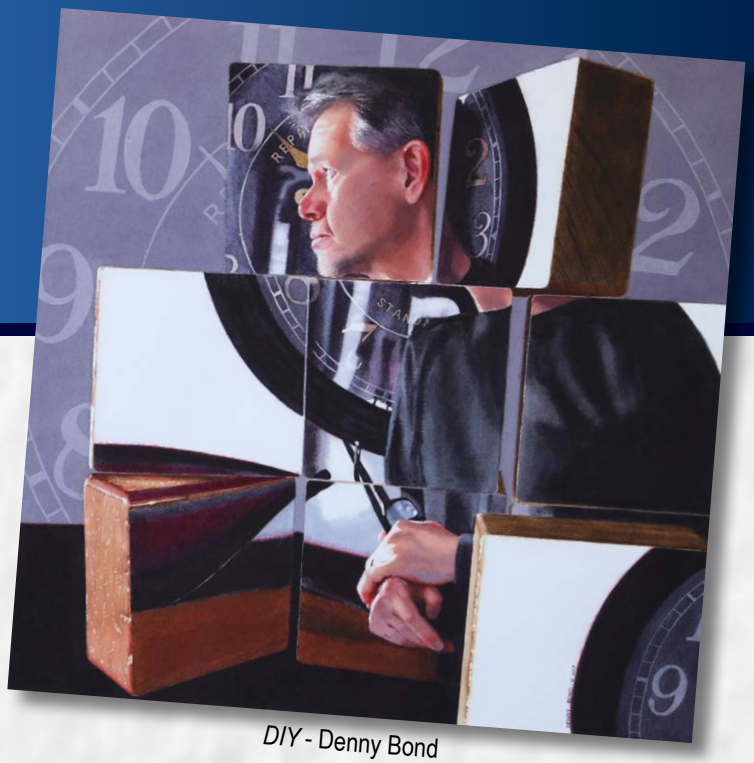
More abstract or less, I try to make my art uplifting and positive, to be happy or at least hopeful, to give encouragement and lighten the human spirit.

From the Ashes - Brenda Benson

Join us in congratulating the winners of the

WATERCOLOR USA HONOR SOCIETY

AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE



DIY - Denny Bond

Cactus Flower 2 - Gary Cadwallader

Purely Spectral - Brenda Benson
(See previous page for larger image.)

Lunch Break on the Mag Mile - Ingrid Albrecht

Old III - Dashuai Sun

"From the Studio" *by Cynthia Kukla*

"My Studio under a Greek Sky" - I am in love with Greece! I was a visiting professor at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2006, 2014 and again in 2015. So I want to tell you about painting watercolors on site at ancient ruins. I went everywhere and have stories about children, antiquities guards and a rather large serpent…

I painted in-situ at many ancient ruins and on visits to museums and Byzantine churches. (To be inconspicuous at Agia Sophia, I tucked behind school children who were getting a lecture. I laid down a dry cleaner's bag before opening my paints on the pew of a World Heritage Basilica.) My first stay in Greece was two months, the next two trips were for six-weeks. I did several hundred small paintings and studies and three sketchbooks in Greece at sites in Athens, Delos, Delphi, Dion, Iraklion, Knossos, Meteora, Mycenae, Mykonos, Napflio, Olympia, Olympiada, Pella, Philippi, Stagira, Thessaloniki, Vergina and others. Look for evidence of raindrops on my watercolor of Mycenae; nature added her marks to my watercolor.

Hugging the mountainside to paint at Mycenae

I am including several pictures from my studio under the Greek sky - which consisted of the actual sites wherever I worked. Sometimes I would be working conveniently on a stonewall and other times I sat or knelt on a hard metal cross path. Sometimes I had company, when children were curious and I had a separate Prang watercolor set and postcard watercolor paper for them to use and we would work together for a bit. What better way to share across generations and cultures than to paint with curious children on tour with their family?

In case you think this sounds like an idyllic vacation, I should mention that on my first research trip, I developed welts on my shoulders from lugging the heavy watercolor pads and blocks, paints, brushes and travel painting palette. Also, most importantly, I was carrying water for painting and for drinking, all supplies and food adding to the organizational mix. Trekking up the stone or gravel path of Mt. Parnassus - site of ancient Delphi - was no easy task.

Dion: Temple of Isis-Tyche study

Delphi. Arriving by the highly organized intercity bus system to the town of Delphi, I wondered, "Where could this magnificent site be?" No sign of the stadium, the famous Tholos or the Temple of Apollo from the town that clung to a ridge of the mountain. My hotel host assured me the site was to the right of the town, following the road. Loaded with a large backpack and a tote bag slung over each shoulder, I headed uphill on the road out of town. Coming around a bend, the magnificent site of Delphi began to slowly reveal itself, nestled into a gorge of the great mountain. (I wised up on subsequent trips and took a rolling duffle with supplies. However, its wheels barely survived the rough passage over rocks and stone steps and were nearly shredded.)

Delphi is pure magic. On my first trip in 2006, new improvements had not been made yet for tourists, so any quarried chunk of marble strewn on the sides of a path became table and chair. I painted like a ban-

shee. I had perfect, unobstructed views, starting with the Sacred Way, its worn marble steps flanked by tall Cyprus trees. There were few guards back then, so I sat wherever the best view and best chunk of marble to sit on was. In the museum, the generous guard let me paint the Delphic Charioteer with my watercolors- no special permission needed to have paint and water in the museum. I felt welcomed like family.

I'm pretty obsessive, so I have several sketchbooks of varied sizes (pocket size for random thoughts and views through a bus window using colored pencils, to medium and large size sketchbook for more robust studies on site and for notes.) I also found watercolor blocks to be invaluable. I put a block down among the weeds and started to paint. You would too, such inspiration and beauty was at every turn. "Better to have a small diamond than a large piece of glass" as Painters Keys authors would say. Watercolor dries quickly in the sun and most times I could tuck everything I worked on safely back in my totes.

Ruins at Mycenae

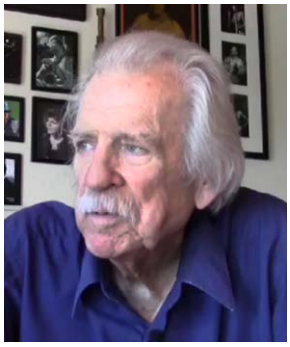
A lot of watercolorists rely on photographs and trace or project onto their paintings from photos. You can spot this process immediately. But to sit before something magnificent and paint in the here and now – there is nothing like it. To be moved, and to paint directly with no mechanical intervention is a magnificent experience. Not easy, but magnificent.

I'll tell two stories about my plein-aire studio, one about the yellow dog at Knossos in Crete, the other about a visit from a serpent. First of all, I must offer that the Archeological Museum of Iraklio, Crete is one of the top museums in the world to see. Why? Because its collection of ancient art, from Linear A and B tablets to Minoan art is breathtaking and extremely rare. This is the ancient Mediterranean civilization brought to life for us to drink in. After two days in the museum I was off to Knossos, a short intercity bus ride away. Immediately I noticed the saddest pack of dogs roaming around the ancient site. One particular short, mangy, outcast yellow dog started following me. He waited as I painted, sitting patiently right by me and I talked to him and realized how little human kindness he must have had. He looked miserable and I shared some cheese and bread crusts from lunch with him. He wolfed it down, mercy what a poor hungry dog to eat bread. I was lonely too; my trip to Crete was a week- long trip away from the university and anyone I knew. Fewer people in Crete spoke English and although I was mastering some basic Greek, the signs were not Romanized so I was really concentrating on not getting lost. And not being so lonely. When I boarded the late afternoon bus after the site of Knossos closed, the little yellow dog tried to jump onto the bus with me. I about cried. I wished I could have done something for this gentle little companion and I cannot think of Knossos without remembering that poor, malnourished and sweet yellow dog.

Painting at Stageira, birthplace of Aristotle

Greece is largely about its culture, its phenomenal impact on Western civilization and on its people. To describe to you experiences talking to Greeks I met during these three journeys would fill a book. Greeks have huge hearts and are passionate about art and life. Even a bad day of painting was still filled with wonder at seeing such magnificent ruins, overhearing stories from tour guides, chatting with locals and eating the fresh wonderful Greek food and drinking local Greek wine. Painting in Greece has changed me forever both in the artwork I am making and in my passion for working on location to make my art as authentic as possible to share with my viewers. I hope to lead a workshop to Greece in 2018, after meeting so many wonderful people on my three research trips there and finding ways to paint on location with relative ease. This is all because I had a studio under the Greek sky.

Memorials



Ted Maddock ~ April 2016

Ted Maddock from Santa Cruz, CA passed April 13, 2016. He was from Monterey, CA and led a life rich in varied art and design endeavors, including watercolor work. A video about Ted and the Maddock family in Soquel made by the Frank Perry of the Capitola Museum can be viewed at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xw68zGbBS84

Jo Bidner ~ November 2016

Jo took up painting late in life, and derived great pleasure from it, especially once she settled on watercolor as a medium. She stuck with it even through 8 years of battling cancer that slowed but never stopped her output. At her memorial open house many of her works were hung to create a gallery like space. People felt it was a moving tribute to her, and a fitting reflection of her creative nature. She was a great mother, an award-winning watercolor artist, a lace scholar, and a museum consultant. Her memory lives on in her children; Jenni, Anne & David Bidner, her brother Fred Heinritz, her grandchildren, and her many friends.

Member News

Katherine Chang Liu was the sole juror for the 37th International Exhibition of San Diego Watercolor Society.

Daily Ledger - Katherine Chang Liu

Bob Mejer:

• Greg Blair, School of Fine Arts-Northern Galleries Director, Northern State University in Aberdeen, S. D. selected my mixed-media watercolor "Jason's Delight," for exhibition in the "Northwest Art Center's Americas 2017: All Media exhibition. The exhibition will be held in the Hartnett Hall Gallery on the campus of Minot State University from August 15 through September 28, 2017.

Winged Totem - Robert Lee Mejer

• Sarah Smelser, professor of art at Illinois State University and co-founder of Manneken Press, Bloomington, IL selected monotype assemblegraph " Winged Totem" for exhibition in the 2017 Mid-America Print Council Members' Exhibition. The Lawrence Arts Center, Lawrence, Kansas is hosting the exhibition with an opening reception on September 29 through October 18, 2017.

Alma with Monarchs - Muriel Elliot Mimura

• The Gray Gallery, located in Brenner Library, begins its 50th Academic Year, with the opening of the QU Art Department (Full/Part-Time) Faculty exhibition. The exhibition features the work of Gray Gallery curator/distinguished professor of art, Robert Lee Mejer, chair of the Division of Fine Arts/ associate professor of art. The Faculty Exhibition ran from August 18-September 15, 2017.

Muriel Elliott Mimura has won the following awards in 2016-2017:

- Southwestern Watercolor Society 2016 Membership Exhibition – Richeson merchandise award for Severo – SMA
- Society of Watercolor Artists 2016 Membership Exhibition - Best of Show for Alma with Monarchs
- Western Federation of Watercolor Societies 2017 Exhibition – Merit Award for Lupe with Oaxacan Embroidery (earning signature status)
- Southern Watercolor Society 2017 Exhibition – Richeson merchandise award for Reflection – Vietnam
- Splash 19 will include Alma with Monarchs

John Salminen received SDWS Best in Show Award in the 37th International Exhibition of San Diego Watercolor Society.

Coat Check - John Salminen

Watercolor Honor Society USA
MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

DEADLINE: JANUARY 31, 2018

Membership dues are payable on or before January 31st of each calendar year.

Date:_____

First Name:_____

Last Name: _____

Address:_____

City/State/Zip:_____

Phone:_____

E-mail_____

Website:_____

Annual Dues: $40 - Make check payable to: WHS

MAIL this form and your check to:
Chalen Phillips, WHS Treasurer
P.O. Box 645, Big Horn, WY 82833

CHECK HERE IF YOU DON'T HAVE EMAIL _____

If you have questions regarding membership, please contact the Membership Chair Carole Hennessy at: **cjhennessey@comcast.net**