

**Manchester Art Association**  
**Judge's comments, 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Members' Exhibit**

It is a great honor and a tremendous responsibility to judge an art show. I appreciate that the Manchester Art Association has entrusted me with this complicated task of judging the 16th Annual Members' Art Exhibit. It is difficult to be an artist and even harder to critique art. Everyone approaches art with varying experience in terms of technical skill, but we all come to it with the hope that our vision will be accepted by our peers, especially in a juried show.

Judges come with unique backgrounds, and an element of subjectivity (we are all human, after all). The same artworks assessed by another judge may have a disparate result. You often hear at an opening "...what was the judge thinking? I would not have picked that piece for a prize...". So the following briefly outlines what I am thinking and looking for when analyzing any art. I hope this is helpful to both show entrants and guests.

**Overall impression of the art.** Regardless of the medium or whether it is abstract or representational: does it resonate? Do I want to return to it? Owing to its composition, technical skill, creativity, evocation of emotion, etc. Sometimes artwork has one of these elements but not the others, sometimes it encompasses all of them. Sometimes the artist is trying to make it so technically skillful that s/he forgets about its soul; conversely someone new to art may exhibit the passion and creativity that makes up for a lack of technical skill.

**Composition is key.** Before anything else you see the overall composition or design. What has been left in, what has been left out? Movement and flow: does it keep my attention, keep me focused, or does my eye stray?

**Skill and technique.** Is the artist comfortable with and understands the medium? Does s/he have mastery of it? How is the execution, finished or hurried? Complete, or overworked? Are there repeating or complementary shapes, patterns, colors and symmetry, textures?

**Creativity and originality of the theme or how it is represented.** Is it a new way of looking at something that is hackneyed, or a completely new theme that is being explored? Meaning and Emotion. Whether representational or abstract does it have deep intent? Does it reference other art? Does it tell a story or illicit emotion? Is it making a statement? Is there allegory, symbolism involved?

Presentation and framing are important, because they complete and complement the piece as a whole. If the rules call for a specific frame, or no frame that is one thing, but if not, then what was the intent of the artist in choosing a mat, a frame or a lack thereof? Was it intentional or random? Does it complement or enhance the work, or is it perhaps a part of the work?

With gratitude for the opportunity to view and assess some really wonderful artwork,  
Agnes Wnuk