



Janie Cohen – Juror’s Statement

It was an honor and a pleasure to jury the AVA Gallery’s 19th Annual Juried Summer Exhibition. It was also an exercise in what might be called Extreme Jurying -- or maybe it was Endurance Jurying -- with temperatures in the upper 90s, no air conditioning, and windows closed because of a construction project right outside. A collection of fans in the galleries helped. Contrary to what one might expect, the conditions served to acutely focus my attention on the task at hand. AVA Gallery’s expert staff and a fleet of sharp summer interns provided enormous assistance, for which I am grateful.

The assembled group of 422 submitted works testifies to the strong and vibrant artistic communities of New Hampshire and Vermont. The range of work was extraordinarily diverse in aesthetic sensibility, choice of medium, and artistic vision. It was a welcome challenge for me to bring my own vision to the body of work, resulting in what may have more the feel of a curated exhibition than a juried show. There are themes that weave their way through the work, shared sensibilities, resonance in approach to materials, and works in a wide range of mediums that seem to speak to one another.

The juror's first prize is awarded to Duncan Johnson for his elegant piece *Nightshade*, which resides somewhere between painting and sculpture. It is constructed of discarded wood that still bears the exuberant paint of its past life, gathered from construction sites and landfills. Duncan's work exemplifies the transformative nature of art, carrying an unexpected poignancy and power in the lingering aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene.

The juror's second prize goes to the Phil Lonergan for *Kitchen Triptych*. The work's scale, distortion, industrial materials, and ambiguous forms are at the same time playful and a little threatening, suggesting that we may have unknowingly passed through the looking glass. The title and one of the three parts of the piece suggest a specific context, while the other two dance around the edges of recognition.

And the juror's third prize is given to Laurie Sverdlove, for *Quick Now, Here Now, Always*. Its spatial disruptions; juxtapositions of natural and industrial landscapes; and saturated, unnatural palette cannot help but bring into question issues of sustainability and our past and future impact on our landscapes. Its equal parts beauty and disturbance create a tension that is palpable.

Honorable Mention goes to three artists working figuratively in vastly different ways: Harry Bernard for his painting, *Was Here 12.2*; Seano Whitecloud for his video, *The Shape of Being: Universal Body*; and Lisa Rae Spahl for her stitching on fabric, *Stumped in Thought*. All three works exhibit an initial restraint, whether due to small scale or subdued palette, but quickly draw in the viewer and deliver their punches.

I am grateful to all of the artists who submitted work, and I am proud to be a part of our corner of the art world. I urge you all to keep on doing what you're doing.

Janie Cohen
Summer 2012