



Black 'N White

January 2021

Mary Dondero – Jurist

I want to thank the Wickford Art Association for inviting me to jury *Black 'N White...an artist's interpretation*. I especially want to thank the artists who submitted work for me to view. It is true that jurying an exhibit is one of the most challenging of tasks while also being most rewarding. Viewing the submissions gave me the luxury to enjoy the inspired and imaginative artworks made by our creative community.

My goal was to do my best in recognizing excellence in any medium regardless of personal preference or distraction from what might be popular. Without accompanying artist's statements, I was required to judge the visual imagery on its own merit. I think this is a good approach as it allows the juror to respond, be moved by, provoked or brought to wonderment without written explanations.

There were many difficult decisions to make and so it's important to explain my position. After several viewing sessions it became clear that there are a multitude of ways to explore the theme of *Black 'N White*, of course that comes as no surprise when working with a creative community. The thread that seemed to connect the many mediums, materials, and approaches, is the collective interest in expressing concepts relating to either opposing or merging forces. I used this as the foundation to ask the basic question: "how successfully does this work of art address the theme *Black 'N White*?"

Of course, most works submitted could have qualified simply because of a palette reduced to black, white and grey, so I established other qualifiers. The additional guidelines I used for the jurying process is meant to establish a balance in concepts, while considering a range of materials and process, creating an exhibit that forms a cohesive statement.

Here are my thoughts regarding the three top award winners.

I appreciate when art is presented with striking elements of beauty, yet on closer inspection we realize that there is an element of sorrow embedded in that beauty. I found this opposing force expressed in *'Alone'* by Jeff Potter. The photograph captures the beauty and strength of magnificent architecture, with a solitary individual is enfolded under the man-made structure, evoking ideas of isolation and overpowering forces that seem to burden us. I found this especially poignant during the current global pandemic.

The evidence of the artist's hand, both spontaneous and controlled cannot be ignored in the gauche and charcoal portrait called "Untitled I" by Catherine Becker. Although it may look as though the image was created with ease, we know its expressive quality is the intention of the artist, and we can feel a force as the subject gazes back at us.

Nightscape Revisited by Ponnapa Prakkamakul is a mixed media image with the use of perspective that makes us believe we are under a bridge, possibly in the water, looking up. The work evokes ideas regarding both contained and open spaces with water implying oscillating experiences. There is light and dark, open and closed space, and we simultaneously sense both movement and stillness; all creating a force that somehow merges into a believable place. It was only later that I learned Ponnapa incorporated actual soil from the site, adding to the content of the work.

In closing, I want to congratulate the artists whose work was admitted to the show. I also want to encourage the artists who were not accepted to continue to believe in their work. I hope the audience enjoys the exhibit as much as I enjoyed looking at and selecting the works.

Mary Dondero – Jurist for *Black 'N White*

marydondero.com

On Facebook: @marydonderoart

On Instagram: mary_donderoart

Education: Mary Dondero is an interdisciplinary artist whose focus is on large-scale works-on-paper, mixed media, and photography. She earned her B.F.A. at Roger Williams University in Bristol RI, where she concentrated in Graphic Design, Printmaking and Photography. Dondero holds an M.A.T. from Rhode Island School of Design, and an M.F.A. from U-Mass Dartmouth.

Professional Teaching: Dondero is currently a full-time tenured faculty member in the Department of Art and Art History at Bridgewater State University, in Massachusetts. During her 2011 sabbatical from teaching Dondero was awarded “Artist in Resident” at Zion National Park in Utah. This resulted in a body of work titled “Perception, Time & Memory”, with one of the resulting paintings now held in the permanent collection at Zion Human History Museum, Springdale, UT.

Exhibition: Dondero’s artwork is regularly exhibited at Atelier Gallery in Newport RI. Her work is also exhibited both nationally and internationally, and is held in several collections, such as the permanent collection of Naestved International Print Studio in Denmark, Bridgewater State University, the Newport Art Museum RI, Healing Arts at RI Hospital, and the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion in New Hampshire. In 2016 the Newport Art Museum presented Dondero’s “Small Points in Time” as a solo exhibit.

Related: She is a founding artist of Imago foundation for the Arts in Warren, RI and serves as Exhibition Curator for the Bristol Art Museum in Bristol, RI. Her studio is located in Warren Rhode Island.