

GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTANCE OF ART INTO NATURE ARTISTS' GUILD EXHIBITIONS

The requirements for exhibition with the Nature Artists' Guild are special. We have a unique natural history focus that distinguishes us from other fine art groups. At the same time, we recognize and support the need for each individual to follow her or his own artistic path. Artwork shown in Guild exhibitions is subject to special guidelines, outlined below, as well as more usual exhibition requirements, such as size of work. All work is refereed for compliance before the exhibition.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The requirements for entry into a Guild exhibition can be divided into five categories.

1. Subject Matter
2. Scientific Criteria
3. Guidelines for Specific Categories of Art
4. Matting and Framing
5. Size Requirements

In addition, standard requirements relating to deadlines, labeling and 3D art will be included in the Exhibition Prospectus mailed to all members.

SUBJECT MATTER

Major emphasis should be on subjects in nature, such as trees, flowers, birds, insects and natural landscapes.

Please do not submit artwork that is more than 5 years old. As a guild, we all take pride in our artistic growth. We all learn from classes and interaction with other artists. We would like to exhibit artwork that is fresh and relatively current.

Man made objects, surfaces and backgrounds may be a part of the composition in an exhibited art work when the **primary intent and focus of the work is to portray botanical or nature-related material**. Examples of objects that may be included using this guideline are vases, table tops, fences or other non-natural backgrounds. *Such objects should not become the primary focus of the work nor be equal in impact to the nature element.*

Text may be included as a design element of the artwork. The text should not be the focal point or stand alone. The overall emphasis of the work should be on the "natural" subject of the piece. Text may also be included as the title, artist's signature or scientific nomenclature. If scientific nomenclature is used, it must be accurate and spelled correctly.

Work must be original, from the artist's own observations.

The final decision of acceptance of art work will be at the discretion of the exhibition referees.

SCIENTIFIC CRITERIA

- a) Nomenclature, if used, must be accurate and correctly spelled
- b) Plants and animals must be identifiable as to genus
- c) Careful attention should be paid to appropriate natural history features such as ecological associations, animal behavior, scale relationships, and color.

A *genus* is a taxonomic classification of plants and animals defined by a consensus of scientific opinion. It is simply a grouping of species with similar characteristics. All oaks, for example, make up a single genus. If you include distinctive features of the specimen you are painting, you will be depicting genus recognizably, whatever artistic style you use (see below). The Arboretum staff can help us correctly identify our plant subjects.

The third scientific criterion is where shades of gray enter into the referee's decision. He/she will first ask, "What is the **intent** of the artist?" Is it to describe the plant or animal accurately or to use its form in a design, or to give an impression of its beauty or character? The referee will base his/her judgment on the artist's focus.

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC CATEGORIES OF ART

a) Scientific illustration (for example, illustrations in monographs or field guides, often black and white). In this category the scientific referee is looking for the "typical" specimen, the "average" plant, insect, or other animal. She/he does not want one of the numerous variations occurring in nature. (Remember, scientists look for such things as numbers of petals, sepals, legs.) The scientific name (genus and species) is usually used.

b) Depiction of subjects around us. You may be painting from a specimen in your yard, at the zoo, or at a vacation site - something that stimulated you. The subject might not be "typical" (a crooked elm, for example, or a leaf with interesting holes). If your intent is not strict scientific illustration, you can use the common name or a nonscientific title. Just paint carefully what you see, and the scientific referee should recognize the genus.

c) Landscapes. Because plants and animals are often distant in a landscape, the scientific referee looks more at overall form and shape than at detail. The style might range from realistic to impressionistic. In loose or impressionistic styles, the artist still needs to pay attention to the overall shape of the natural form. In a style that is mostly loose with a little tight detail, be sure the detail is rendered accurately. A typical Guild landscape might approach realism in the foreground, show basic shapes and forms in the middle ground, and soft impressionism in the background.

d) Design art. Plants, animals, and natural forms may be used stylistically in design pieces, as in a scarf, a stained glass window, or a silhouette. The referee will still need to recognize the general shape of a grape leaf or bluebird, but would accept the piece as long as he could determine the genus grouping it falls into.

e) Colorist work. Here, the intent of the artist is to use color to convey thoughts and emotions. There is some leeway to move from the accurate color of a scientific illustration - to use color to accomplish a specific artistic goal. However, the scientific referee still looks for recognizable forms in the subjects - the genera depicted.

f) Impressionistic art. Some impressionistic works, like Monet's early water lilies, are acceptable. It is obvious to the scientist that Monet studied the shapes and habits of water lily leaves and flowers to show real lilies in their natural environment.

g) Oriental-style pieces. Painting the spirit or gesture of nature. Some oriental-style pieces are acceptable. Most traditional oriental pieces show great care in the study of nature. Details, though stylized, are recognizable natural forms.

h). Digitally painted artwork will be accepted subject to the following criteria:

- Artwork must be original.
- The manipulation of scanned photographs or other digital images is not acceptable, except for use as a background or texture. For example, a scan of textured paper for use as background texture is acceptable. Scanning a photograph of a plant and applying Photoshop filters is not acceptable.
- The artwork must be accompanied by a CD containing unflattened working files in native file format (e.g., Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Freehand). This CD must be submitted prior to Referee Night in accordance with the Prospectus.
- If the work is for sale, it must be printed on archival paper using archival inks or dyes.

To sum up, for categories 1 and 2, carefully paint what you see. For categories 3 through 7, interpret what you see according to your own artistic vision while still remembering that genera must be recognizable.

MATTING AND FRAMING

The best presentation for exhibition should keep the focus on the artwork, the framing secondary in terms of visual order. Please use good judgment when choosing a frame, keeping in mind the overall size, weight and bulk of your framed artwork that will be hung for display during the exhibition.

Matting and framing must be clean and of professional quality, using archival materials. No saw-tooth hangers are allowed.

- Please use neutral colored mats.
- All work to be hung must have firmly attached screw eyes or D-rings and picture hanging wire. No saw-tooth hangers will be allowed. The center of the picture wire should be no less than 1” from the top of the artwork when stretched for hanging. **Please have some slack in the wire, but not too much! The wire should NOT be flat and taut, there needs to be enough slack so that when you lift the wire with your finger, it forms a slight “tent” shape.** Screw eyes or D-rings should be placed approximately one third of the way down from the top of the frame.
- Bin art work must be matted, backed and wrapped – no frames are allowed. *Professional quality matting/wrap is essential. No plastic wrap, please!*

SIZE REQUIREMENTS

Framed Work:

- Framed artwork using glass: outside dimensions, including frame may not exceed 28” x 36”. Note that the new boards will allow us to hang larger glazed pieces, which should be a benefit to pastel artists!
- Framed artwork using Plexiglas: outside dimensions including frame may not exceed 28” x 36”
- The width of frame molding may not exceed 2 ½”.
- Canvas maximum outside dimensions: 40” x 30”

Acceptance of any framed artwork that exceeds size limitations or is overly heavy with respect to the display panels will be at the discretion of the Exhibition Committee.

Bin Art:

- Size may not exceed 30” x 30” including matting

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

No mechanically reproduced prints are eligible for exhibition as framed art. Hand pulled prints and engravings are acceptable. Prints will be accepted for bin art provided that they are of commercial, archival quality and are prominently labeled as such. Prints not meeting this standard will not be accepted.

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