

Judge's Statement

Watercolor Gone Wild Exhibit, South Bend Museum of Art

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In northern Indiana, we are blessed to be the home of the St. Joe Valley Watercolor Society—a group dedicated to the support of artists working in the watercolor medium. For this exhibition, the group's members were encouraged to explore the limits of watercolor within their own personal style. From among 42 entries (all created within the past two years), I selected 27 artworks that—to me—best capture the spirit of “wild-ness” either in content, or in the handling of the medium. This does not preference a less controlled handling of paint (think splatters and drips), but rather the excitement of a work that utilizes the medium to its fullest potential.

For example, “wild” is not the first word evoked by Margaret Sak's painting, *Late Winter Afternoon—Wild Cobus Creek*. But what excited me was how a physical, and completely believable space was created by the artist with a medium that through its transparent nature can often seem so ephemeral. I feel like I could walk along that quiet creek. On the other hand, “wild” definitely comes to mind when one looks at Ann Jaglas's, *Free Fallin'*, which at first glance looks like a loose aggregate of brightly colored brushstrokes and overlays. However, the more one looks, the more one sees how competently Ms. Jagla holds the image together while surrendering no amount of energy. The “wildest” painting to me was Diane Reader Dorn's painting, *Wild and Wooley*. The gridded background evokes a sunset with rectangles roughly the size of postcards. But the triteness of depicting a sunset is turned on its head with the interruption of an enigmatic abstract form. At once it seems like a neuron or vegetal form. Whatever it is—even if it is just abstract marking—it's definitely alive. And wild! It's a haunting image that will stay with me for quite some time.

Congratulations to all of the artists in the exhibition, and thank you for granting me the honor of jurying your fantastic work. I hope that it encourages SBMA's visitors to pick up a paintbrush and explore their own wild side of watercolors!