

ART TALK
July 5, 2006

ENTERING JURIED SHOWS

As I mentioned in my last column about attending a wildlife art festival, there are a variety of paths that an artist can follow when building a career. Juried shows are another option.

Why juried shows or competitions? John Banovich, the internationally known wildlife artist, suggested, during a marketing discussion at a workshop I attended, that it is beneficial to get one's work out there in nicely done, full color show catalogs that stay around for years. Plus, if you win an award, it can lead to editorial coverage in national magazines and pique the interest of gallery owners. That made sense to me, so I thought I'd give it a try. But what shows? A good general source is Art Calendar magazine. For me, the first step was researching competitions that are receptive to, or are for, wildlife art and who put out good catalogs, such as Art for the Parks, Birds in Art and Art and the Animal.

Entering multiple shows in a year presents an interesting juggling act. Approaching this in an organized way is essential, both for one's sanity and to make sure everything is correct. So-

1. I print out or send for the prospectus, which contains all the information about the show- fees, deadlines, submission requirements. Then I make a list of either the paintings that I have that might be appropriate or subjects I might do for each show. I note whether the deadline is for "must be postmarked by" (preferable) or "must be received by"(common).
2. Submission requirements are in flux. Some shows only want slides. Some will take slides, jpegs or CDs. Some want photos to accompany the jpeg. Some don't accept slides, but only jpegs or CDs. Confused? I do a list for each show- possible art, deadline, image requirements.
3. A few shows want bio/resume information, but acceptance will be judged solely on your slides, which brings us to...
4. Professional slides/digital images are a **must**. This means absolutely nothing visible in the frame except the image, period. No frames, funky fences or Fido. Your work, no matter how good, **will** be eliminated from the competition. It must be properly lit with no glare or hot spots, square to the frame and in sharp focus. If you are shooting your own slides, then you will need to get special tape to black out the non-image area. For digital images, you can crop out the background in a program like Photoshop. These days there are a number of web-based businesses who make show quality slides from digital image files and only charge about \$2 for the first slide and \$1 for dups. This is definitely the way to go. If you are unable or unwilling to shoot your work at sufficiently high quality, you must have it done professionally. Otherwise you are just wasting your entry fee. Trust me on this. Judges look at each slide for maybe three seconds.
5. Make sure slides are labeled as requested. Once again, everyone seems to want it done a little differently. I use a label maker which gives a clean, legible and professional-looking result.
6. When the time comes to send in your entry, check the submission requirements like you are an astronaut getting ready for a launch. If an entry only has to be postmarked by a certain date, then I send it through the Post Office and pay a little extra to access an 800 number to check on delivery. But if it absolutely, positively has to be there by a certain date, then I buy peace of mind and use FedEx.
7. While you wait to hear if you're in, purchase your frame(s) and shipping materials, so you won't go crazy trying to get the work to the show on time. I use AirFloat Strongboxes and, in fact,

some shows are requiring them. They aren't cheap, but they are reusable and your work will arrive there and get back to you in good shape. I ship UPS or FedEx, depending on how close to the deadline for delivery I've cut it.

8. If you get in, three cheers and celebrate! If not, don't take it personally. While there are objective criteria by which a work of art can be judged, what gets into a specific show has an element of luck to it. I had one painting rejected by Arts for the Parks last year which is now in an equally prestigious show, Art and the Animal Kingdom XI in Bennington, Vermont. So don't give up!