



## Tips on Entering Our AIS Juried Exhibitions

by Debra Joy Groesser, CEO/President American Impressionist Society

### Why Enter Juried Shows Anyway?

There are juried art shows out there for all experience and skill levels. AIS now offers three juried show opportunities as a benefit of your membership: our AIS Impressions Small Works Showcase in the spring/summer, our annual National Juried Exhibition in the fall and now our brand new online exhibition which will be held in late summer. Entering a juried show can take some courage, as not everyone who submits work will have their work accepted. Knowing and accepting that going in, juried shows can be a great way to get exposure for your work. Juried shows can offer:

- Exposure to galleries, collectors and the media (all but one of the galleries I have ever been represented by found me through a juried or invitational show.)
- Discounted advertising opportunities with show media sponsors
- A way to build your resume
- Awards and recognition
- Sales potential

If any of these are part of your career goals, then entering juried shows may be worth your time and money. A word of caution though: you will not be accepted into every show you enter. You WILL face rejection (in fact more often than acceptance usually) and must be prepared to accept that it is a part of the process and your growth as an artist. More on that later.

### Choosing What to Enter:

**Make sure your work fits the show's criteria.** Each exhibition you enter will have specific criteria which can be based on subject, medium, style: for example, plein air paintings only, impressionism, realism, oil paintings only, watercolor only, etc. If you enter an abstract or non-representational piece in a show which requires paintings be impressionistic (as ours is), or realism or representational, your work will be disqualified for not adhering to the show criteria. AIS shows accept oil, watercolor, pastel, acrylic and gouache.

AIS has online catalogs of previous years' shows on our website, so you can check out the type of work that has typically been accepted in our shows. Keep in mind however that the small images aren't necessarily indicative of how loosely the pieces are painted due to limitations of digital images and the size of those images. The paintings accepted into the AIS

shows are within a wide range of impressionistic style - not tight realism with hard lines and not abstract – and are representational in subject matter.

**Be sure you submit your very best work and be sure it is available.** All juried exhibitions are competitive, and the artists whose work is accepted do submit their best work. Keep in mind that you are competing against a different group of paintings with every show you enter, and the number of paintings you are competing against varies from show to show. If the painting you are entering is currently at a gallery, be sure to get permission from the gallery and have them put it on hold for the show. Better yet, enter paintings that you have possession of to avoid having to withdraw from the show and risk disqualification from future shows.

**On Judges and Jurors:** AIS will always publish the names of our judges (who give the awards). The Judge of Awards for each show is NOT one of our jurors for that same show. Our panel of jurors (who score the works and whose scores determine the pieces accepted in the show) are always a combination of AIS Signature and Master members and their names are always kept anonymous (they don't know who the other jurors are either). There are several reasons for this. When jurors' names are publicized they are sometimes contacted by artists who are not accepted into the show, expecting to get an explanation or a critique. Occasionally they are openly criticized on social media (please don't ever do this!). Although jurors are paid a small stipend, they are not paid to do critiques in addition to jurying. Some people enter shows based on who the judges and jurors are...they try to "paint for the judge" thinking if they paint the subjects or style the judge does it increases their chances of acceptance or awards. This is just usually not the case. In my experience, you have a much better chance of acceptance if you enter your best work regardless of who the judge or jurors are. As a personal example, the late Daniel Greene, the master portrait painter, chose two of my landscape paintings for awards in different shows. If you think about it, a judge who specializes in portraits will see every flaw in a portrait. Same goes for a judge who specializes in landscape, seascape, etc...so think about that next time you're tempted to "paint for the judge."

### **You've chosen the painting(s) you want to enter...now what?**

**Prospectus:** Read the show prospectus carefully. Note deadlines and follow the instructions to the letter. Avoid having your entry disqualified because of careless errors or omissions.

**Images of Your Work:** Nearly all shows, including the AIS show, use digital images for their entry submissions. You will need high quality photos of your work...use a professional photographer if necessary. Your photos *must not* show frames or any extraneous backgrounds...*only the image of the artwork itself*. The photos must be in focus and oriented correctly. The jurors have a very short time to view each image and they have to score your work based on the image you submit. If they can't see the work clearly, it will hurt your score or could even disqualify your work. Make sure your image is sized correctly according to specifications for the entry system. AIS uses Juried Art Services as our entry system. Their image specifications are on their website: Images need to be between 1400 and 4000 pixels wide on the longest side and 300 PPI. Any larger or smaller than this and the system will not accept your image. We recommend you make the images closer to the 4000 pixels size so that the jurors can see your painting as best as possible.

**Membership Dues:** Membership in AIS is required to be eligible to enter AIS shows so be sure to check your membership profile on the AIS website to see if your dues are current. If not, be sure to pay the membership fee/renew your membership before submitting your show entry. The show entry fee is in addition to the annual membership dues. Entry fees are not refundable whether you are accepted into the show or not.

**Pricing Your Work:** If you are entering a show that will be held in a gallery, such as our national juried exhibition or our small works showcase, your work MUST be for sale and must be priced according to your established sales prices. Do not overprice your work because you don't want it to sell. That is unfair to the hosting gallery and can put you at risk of disqualification. The galleries rely on sales to recoup the costs of hosting exhibitions such as ours.

If you don't have an established price structure for your work, be sure to take into consideration the costs of entering, membership, shipping (if you get accepted into the show), framing and supplies, gallery commission and something for your time. As an example: Entry fee can be \$39 to \$58 depending on the show and number of pieces you enter.

Membership dues are \$60 for the year. Then let's say your frame cost \$50, shipping to and from the show is \$60 each way, and your materials cost for creating your piece is \$50. That's a total of \$280 plus your entry fee, so on the high end let's say \$338 in costs. If the gallery commission is 40%, your painting needs to be priced at \$565 for you to break even. There can also be a "crate fee" and shipping box expenses, so just be sure to cover your costs. Prices on your entries cannot be changed once the entry period ends.

**Try Not To Wait Until the Last Minute to Enter:** We highly recommend that you submit your entry well before the entry deadline. The majority of entries for juried shows usually come in during the last week prior to the deadline, many on the very last day. For shows using online jurying systems such as ours, once the deadline has passed and the system has closed, it cannot be reopened to accept late entries. Inevitably problems can and will arise at the last minute, so it's best to plan to submit your entries a few days ahead of that final deadline just to be safe.

**Double Check All Information!** We can't stress this enough. Fill out the application and make sure all your information is entered correctly, including title, size, price and medium. Note that prices cannot be changed once the entry period has ended. **Very important:** Do not commit the painting(s) you enter to any other gallery or exhibition or submit it to any other juried show until you know it/they were NOT accepted into our show. The paintings must be for sale if accepted and if they sell, they will not be available for any other commitments beyond our show. Also make sure your contact information in your Juried Art Services account is current and up to date, especially your email address. The email address on your JAS account is the one your jury notifications will be sent to.

## **The Jury Process**

As far as our jurying process is concerned, your work will be reviewed by a panel of five highly qualified, nationally recognized Master and/or Signature level artists. The jurors do not know who the other jurors are and they each work independently. We use a "blind jury" process where the juror does not know the identity of the artist whose work he/she is viewing. Scoring is based solely on the merit of the work, including technical merit and level of impressionistic style. The jurors view every painting that is entered and assigns each one a score from one (low) to seven (high). The jurors have a very short time to view and score each piece which is why it is so important that the images of your work be the best quality possible. Once all of the jurors have completed scoring all entries, the scores are tabulated automatically by the jurying service. The number of paintings selected is determined according to the available display space in the host gallery. The highest scoring paintings which fall within the number of pieces the gallery can accommodate become the accepted paintings for that show. Although no jurying process is perfect, AIS believes this method of selection is the most fair and unbiased method currently available.

## **Jury Results – Elation or Deflation**

This is the nerve-wracking part of entering juried shows. The waiting and anticipation is hard! Every show will list notification dates for the jury results. Mark that on your calendar and note if the results will be posted online or if you will receive an email notification.

### **If you are accepted:**

Note shipping and delivery instructions and dates on your calendar. If you don't ship your work to the show on time, you risk disqualification from that show and subsequent shows.

Make sure to include any crate fees, return shipping labels, bios...whatever is required.

What if your painting sells before the show? The gallery hosting the show will handle the sale and take their commission according to the show prospectus. You will be required to send the painting to the show regardless, and it will be required to hang for the entire length of the show. The gallery will ship it to the buyer at the end of the show. Again, adhere to the rules as stated on the prospectus to avoid possible disqualification from future shows.

Please do not pull out of the show once you've been accepted. If you do, you will be ineligible to submit for subsequent AIS shows for three years. We do this because we are only allowed to accept a certain number of paintings for each show. If you pull out, you've denied another member the opportunity to have had a piece in the show.

Try to attend the opening reception if at all possible. This is a great opportunity for networking, meeting gallery owners, collectors and other artists. There's a higher chance of selling your work if collectors can meet you and connect with you.

### **If your work is "declined" – the dreaded "rejection" letter**

This is the hardest part...hands down. I once heard OPA Master Neil Patterson say: "If you're accepted, you're not necessarily as good as you think you are, and if you're rejected you're not as bad as you think you are. Just keep painting the best paintings you can and eventually you will be accepted." It's true!

Don't give up. It took me 13 times entering the Oil Painters of American National Juried Exhibition before I was finally accepted. Persistence, hard work and perseverance do pay off. *The only way you will never get into a show is if you quit trying and don't enter. The only way your last rejection will be your last is if you never enter again.*

Personally, I take each rejection as a personal challenge to try harder, to make my next painting even better than the last. Do I get down and discouraged? Absolutely! Go ahead and have a pity party for a few hours or a day, but don't let it overwhelm or defeat you. Above all, ***be gracious and be professional***...refrain from complaining to or about show organizers, judges and jurors about not being accepted, especially on social media. You never know who is following you on social media - could be gallery owners, magazines, collectors – so it's incredibly important to be professional. I recently heard an American Idol contestant who, when she was sent home, said "My 'no' was someone else's yes...and for them I am happy. I just wasn't my time this time." That is really a gracious way to handle rejection.

Know that in EVERY show, there are always a lot of deserving works that do not get in. Every show has limits as to how many pieces that can be accepted. Every juror or panel of jurors is different. Every show you enter a particular painting in, you are competing against an entirely different group of paintings. Most artists, myself included, have experienced having a painting rejected from one show only to win an award with the same painting in another show.

### **The Bottom Line**

AIS now offers three juried show opportunities as a benefit of your membership: our AIS Impressions Small Works Showcase in the spring/summer, our annual National Juried Exhibition in the fall and now our brand new online exhibition which will be held in late summer. Entering juried shows can be a great way to get your work out there and build your resume. It takes courage and you will have disappointments along the way, but it's all part of the process of growing in your work and your career. Be patient, keep trying, keep working hard and growing in your work...and don't give up.

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