

# ART SHOWS

I've been participating in local juried art competitions/shows for a number of decades now. Some years may pass in between entries but, when I produce new pieces, I always attempt to make the rounds with the shows. To answer, "why?" my response is twofold - there is prize money up for grabs, but more importantly, there is the experience. When I was taking art and video production classes we routinely evaluated each other's work, so I got used to constructive criticism. I also got used to having to explain (and defend) my work. So, entering shows where you're "competing" with other artists for awards or your piece is simply hanging on a wall amidst others doesn't make me anxious, it's just exposure.

What I've learned from entering shows is this: sometimes your work is accepted, and sometimes it isn't. Sometimes you win an award, most times you don't. Create what appeals to you. Enter shows because you want to, with no expectations. Think of the non-refundable entry fees and the entry process as part of your education in the business of art. Buy the equipment/tools/supplies that you can afford and create the project you can pay for - so if you sell it, you don't owe anyone money, just yourself for your time and effort.

I've gotten pieces rejected from one show and accepted in another, or even win an award. You never know what will appeal to the juror. Create what appeals to you. I enlarge/frame prints I want to see every day in my house - some have connections to travels, others appeal to me because of the content. I make them big enough to fit that space. This has helped me determine which shows I'll submit my pieces to and which ones I'll pass on. I've also learned which shows are going to be worth the expense of my time and money and which ones don't provide enough return on my investment.

When your work is accepted into shows, attend the opening. Look with an appraising eye at others artists' work. Do you like their technique even if you don't like the finished piece? Try to discern what other artists are saying or expressing and apply it to your own. How can you improve what you're doing? Art is subjective. If you don't like someone else's piece - why not? Are you able to articulate it and explain, instead of just, "I don't like it" or, "My child could've made that." Watch other people stop and look at your pieces. DO they stop? What is their reaction? How long do they look at it for? Do they step forward to inspect or step back to take it all in?

Seeing others' work and their struggles will help you grow and evolve as an artist. Other artists may inspire you to experiment with different themes, techniques and mediums. (I often look at the types of frames used and the amounts that other artists sell their pieces for.)

For most juried shows, there are submission guidelines. For example, the pieces you submit have to be created in the last two years so they are new/current, not something you made in school decades ago. If you're a working artist, and in this age of social media, exposure in shows is always a plus to grow your audience. Once your pieces are accepted into a show, you can't submit them again to the same show. You can, however, submit the same pieces to different shows throughout the year. Just make sure you don't overlap the dates of the shows otherwise your pieces won't be available for the next show.



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