

Principles of Design used by the MPS Board in Evaluating Artwork for Signature Membership

The MPS Board reviews submissions for Signature Membership in the Maryland Pastel Society at our quarterly board meetings (see MPS events calendar for dates). In our reviews, we use the following artistic concepts and principles to help us make both fair and professional assessment of your artwork, and we encourage you to use them to evaluate your own artwork prior to submission. Taken as a whole, these concepts and principles are considered to be the hallmarks of successful paintings, although no one painting must exhibit every one. They also comprise the standards set by most jurors and may therefore be useful to you when applying for juried local and national shows as well as professional status in other art-related organizations.

CONCEPT

Communication: Has the artist successfully used the elements of design (balance, unity, contrast, rhythm, repetition, variety, and format) and the principles of color (hue, value, intensity, and temperature) to establish a mood or convey meaning?

Emotion: Is the viewer able to understand the artist's feelings about the subject?

Viewer Engagement: Has the artist over-articulated the subject? Or has something been left to the viewer's imagination?

COMPOSITION

Balance: Has the artist used the principles of color and dominance to successfully balance the composition and create interest? Has the artist created a feeling of balance using the elements of design?

Editing: Does the artist include objects and forms that are unnecessary or that distract the viewer from the painting's focal point and intent?

Focal Point: Has the artist used contrast to establish a clear focal point? Is it located at one of the generally accepted "sweet spots" within the picture plane or if not, does it work to communicate the artist's intent?

Intervals: Are the positive and negative shapes varied in spacing, in size, or in other ways? If forms and shapes are repeated and regular, has the artist compensated for that regularity elsewhere to balance the composition?

Movement: Has the artist established a path for the viewer's eye to follow throughout the painting, including the use of visual "rest areas" as necessary?

Simplification: Has the artist successfully massed value shapes in such a way as to strengthen the composition?

Unity: When viewed as a whole, do all the various elements of the painting work together to create a unified image? Or do there seem to be separate paintings within the painting?

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Atmospheric Perspective: Does the artist demonstrate an understanding of the principles and techniques of atmospheric perspective? Have those principles and techniques been effectively applied to create depth?

Color Harmony: Has the artist successfully used the principles of color to create color harmony?

Drawing: Does the artist demonstrate an ability to render form accurately and believably, correctly applying the principles of proportion and linear perspective? Are the marks drawn in any interesting and varied way?

Edges: Does the artist make effective use of both hard and soft edges to reinforce focus, movement, and depth?

Light: Has the artist established a consistent direction, strength, and temperature for the light that falls on the subject?

Pastel Application: Does the artist demonstrate skill in applying the pastel to the surface? If strokes are evident, are they internally consistent within the painting? Do they help create and reinforce the painting's concept, movement, and mood? Are they fresh or are they overworked?

Presentation: Has the artist presented his/her work in a professional manner? Are the images well lit and well photographed? Are all submitted paintings clearly identified?

Simultaneous Contrast: Does the artist demonstrate knowledgeable and effective use of the principles of simultaneous contrast? [*Simultaneous contrast is the effect upon each other of colors of varying hue, value, intensity, and temperature when placed in juxtaposition.*]

Style: Even if the subject matter varies, has the artist demonstrated a personal style that is consistent across all five paintings under review? Is the style consistent within the painting as well?

Value: Are the values correct and are the value relationships working?

SOURCE MATERIALS

From Life: Regardless of subject, has the artist clearly demonstrated skill at translating the visual motif from three-dimensional life to a two-dimensional painting surface? Or are there obvious errors in rendering, placement, editing, and/or perspective?

From Photos: Has the artist demonstrated knowledge of the distortions of color, value, and perspective that can be present in photographs and taken steps to correct for those distortions? Or are those distortions still evident in the painting?

