

A STRUCTURED APPROACH FOR THE SELECTION OF ARTWORKS FOR BOTANICAL ART EXHIBITIONS

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Summary: Discussion paper re selection of works for botanical art exhibitions. First circulated in 2003 to those committee members involved with the American Society of Botanical Artists exhibitions. This paper has since been revised so it addresses all botanical art organizations. Comments and discussion by all interested botanical artists are sought with a view to assisting their exhibition committees to establish a credible selection process for botanical art exhibitions.
(M. A. Saul, 2003.)

1. ESTABLISHMENT OF GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES - FOR ORGANIZERS & JURORS

The organization provides *exhibition organizers & jurors* with guidelines that include –

- (i) Criteria to be used for the selection of jurors
- (ii) Criteria to be used for the selection of artwork
- (iii) Comprehensive description of the jury process

These guidelines would be sent out to -

- Members of the exhibition committee
- Organizers of future exhibitions
- Selected jury panel
- To the membership – upon request.

GENERAL GUIDELINES - FOR EXHIBITORS

The organization circulates to the *membership & judges* of awards guidelines that include –

- (i) Submission of slides
- (ii) Jury selection – the criteria used for selecting a jury panel
- (iii) Selection criteria for submissions (with definitions)

These guidelines should inform future participants (“Artwork Selection Process”) just how the requirements listed below are used objectively in the *initial selection* by exhibition organizers before artwork is presented to the jury.

- Slide quality sufficiently illustrates the selected theme
- Adherence to the requested media

Notice of the exhibition’s theme and weighted ranking (see below) established by the organizers would obviously be circulated separately to exhibition applicants as part of the specific requirements for a particular exhibition and to those invited as judges so they are also aware of the specific criteria when selecting artwork for awards.

2. CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF A JURY PANEL

Credible botanical art jury panels should be appointed using the following criteria –

- The panel of jurors does not include exhibition organizers or those wishing to submit work to the exhibition.
- Each juror receives the *Exhibition Guidelines for Jurors* and acts upon these requirements.
- The jury panel requires four members (no less than three including two botanical artists).

Panel selection is based on a juror having expertise in at least one of the fields listed.

- ART: Two practicing botanical artists who are well regarded in the field.
- SCIENCE: A botanist or horticulturalist.
- ART MARKET: A gallery/fine arts curator or art collector with an appreciation of this art form.

3. CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF BOTANICAL ARTWORKS

Core Criteria: Juried botanical art exhibitions must maintain a high standard - objectively established – by using a set score based on the mandatory criteria (*Absolute Score*). Work selected must first gain an acceptable absolute score from the criteria at the core of this traditional art form to ensure a high standard is maintained.

Elective Criteria: the Exhibition Committee can select these as additional criteria that could be used in the “second round” of jury selection to accommodate a particular theme chosen by the exhibition committee.

MANDATORY CORE CRITERIOR FOR BOTANICAL ART

- ❖ **Artistic Sensitivity**
- ❖ **Technical Skill**
- ❖ **Botanical Accuracy**

ELECTIVE CRITERIA

- ❖ **Originality**
- ❖ **Popular Appeal**

DEFINITIONS

Artistic Sensitivity – knowledge of established visual art concepts.

(Demonstrates appreciation for the *Elements & Principals of Composition*.)

Technical Skill – fine draughtsmanship.

(Proficiency in drawing, media application and rendering of fine detail.)

Botanical Accuracy – the subject’s specific character and structural detail is correctly portrayed. (It is the responsibility of the artist to ensure that a scientific name lettered onto the artwork is current and correct. Do not reject art with incorrect nomenclature if it appears that the artist can correct this.)

Originality evident in the artwork in either or both of the following –

The type of botanical subject selected – one that provides an unusual subject.

Innovative approaches in composition or technique.

Popular Appeal – the artwork holds “wall appeal” that attracts the public.

4. INITIAL SELECTION OF SUBMISSIONS FOR EXHIBITION ORGANIZERS

Weighted Ranking

To further facilitate the jury process the exhibition organizers must establish a weighted ranking by selecting two of the five criteria (from the three *Core* criteria or two *Elective* criteria) in accordance with the theme of the exhibition. The jury would use this ranking in the second round of the selection process. Below are two examples of how these rankings could be applied.

- Exhibition is weighted with a theme that has “Art” as the main criterion. This would be weighted towards *Originality* and *Popular Appeal*. Although the exhibition is weighted towards artistic sensitivity it is acknowledged that botanical accuracy is mandatory and accounted for in the jury’s first round selection. In this case artists are given greater freedom in presenting their own perceptions about how best to present the subject.

This concept should promote traditional or innovative works where wall appeal may well be a serious consideration - along with their subject selection and composition. As a general rule this may not be an area that the scientist on the jury panel is at all knowledgeable about but if they do have a dissenting point of view that is based on botanical accuracy then this must be reconciled during the jury process.

- Exhibition is weighted with a theme that has “Science” as the main criteria. This would be weighted towards *Botanical Accuracy* and *Technical Skill*. Although the exhibition is weighted towards the scientific aspect of the art it is acknowledged that artistic sensitivity is mandatory and accounted for in the jury’s primary or first round selection score. In this case the art conforms to the rigors of creating a graphic scientific description of the main characters that truly distinguish one similar species or cultivar etc. from another.

An exhibition with “Science” as the weighted ranking may not have artworks with startling wall appeal however it may be a really worthwhile consideration if the concept for an exhibition is one where the artwork presented for selection represents a record of endemic flora – a project that should be overseen by a botanist. This approach should be encouraged and favors those interested in for example, the conservation of their local flora as it focuses on art that does not compete for showiness. Naturally “wall appeal” would be a major consideration for the more regular exhibitions and by those concerned with the general art market but in this case their views would be secondary to this particular theme.

Exhibition themes

The exhibition organizers establish the theme and then the criteria for the weighted ranking. Notice of the *theme* and the *weighted ranking* must be included with the printed

exhibition entry requirements. Whatever the designated theme, a successful exhibition is one that ensures quality with variety while maintaining an overall unity throughout.

Suggested themes for exhibitions other than the regular mix –

Horticultural: Seasonal Flora, Orchids, Flowering Trees, Fruit & Veg.

Conservation: Regional Flora, Rare or Threatened Plants.

Innovative approaches: in composition and art media, incorporates three-dimensional artworks by sculptors using a botanical theme and so on.

Deadline

Organizers set a deadline that adequately accommodates the time required *after* the deadline, for preparation of material ready of the selection process by the jury.

Slides

Due to the uniqueness of this art with its detail and in most cases the adherence to a white background, the overall image area (which includes the white surround space in all traditional botanical art compositions) may be regarded by an artist as an essential element of their composition and therefore should not be excluded in the slide of the general view of the work. It should be noted in the “Guidelines for Exhibitors” that artists who have a dilemma where their attention to detail can not be fully appreciated in a general view should be allowed to submit a second slide of a close-up view of the artwork in order that the detail can be fully appreciated by the jury.

Primary Exclusions -

Exhibition organizers must have the authority to exclude the following from the jury process –

- Work that does not comply with the main theme listed in the exhibition’s submission criteria.
- Sub standard sides - unsuitable exposures, insufficient image area or griminess.

5. SELECTION PROCESS FOR THE JURY PANEL – an objective approach

Slides that have passed the initial selection by the exhibition organizers (see Primary Exclusions) are then passed on to the Jury Panel for the start of formal jury selection. This procedure involves two levels (rounds) of scoring – the first is to select works that meet the set standard and achieve the pre-established “Absolute Score”. If there are major differences in the absolute score for a particular submission then the all-important reconciling of scores must be achieved between jurors before the next round proceeds.

It is preferable that the two rounds of scoring (see below) are completed in one session. However, if there are huge numbers of slides then they should be bundled into the number of sessions the jury feels it requires to accomplish the task successfully. However, each session should include the two-rounds of the selection process for each bundle of slides.

Scoring

The score range for each set of criterion selected by the exhibition organizers that includes the three core criterion would be set at 0 – 5. For expediency and to maintain a credible standard for this art form, those eligible for selection in the *first round* of jury

selection must gain from each juror an “**Absolute Score**” established by using only the three core criterion and multiplying each of these by a factor of x6. With the acceptable score to be reached for each core criterion set from 3 – 5 and then multiplied x6 it would set the acceptable range for the score from each of the mandatory criterion from 18 – 30. Therefore the first absolute and objective marker for the primary selection of a work is an absolute score from all three core criteria set from 54 – 90 points. Submissions with an absolute score of less than 54 are excluded.

- **First Round:** For each submission jurors establish their own scores for each of the core criterion, (without consulting other jurors).
- **Second Round –final selection:** This involves scoring using just the two *elective or thematic criteria* (e.g. *Originality & Wall Appeal* or *Botanical Accuracy & Technical Skill*) selected for the particular exhibition by the exhibition organizers. The score for each of these criterion are set from 0 – 5. The maximum score that includes all five criteria would be 100 points.

Acceptable score for each of the core criteria -
Artistic Sensitivity, Technical Skill, Botanical Accuracy is set from 3 – 5.

Each core criterion is then multiplied x6 giving a score from 18 – 30 for each.
The Absolute Score from the total of all three core criteria is set from 54 – 90

Score for each of the two elective criteria is 0 – 5 (Max. = 10 points)

Total score = Absolute Score + Elective Criteria Score (Max. Score = 100 points)

Procedure: (a) To begin this round the jury members compare each artwork’s *absolute score* and reconcile where necessary. (If the absolute score given by a juror for a particular work is quite different from the score given by the other jurors then that juror must ably defend their decision, after which a re-evaluation between jurors needs to ensue.)

(b) Once scores are reconciled (absolute scores adjusted accordingly) the works that do not qualify for further selection (those with an absolute score of below 54) are eliminated from further selection.

(c) Final selection is achieved by adding the higher score totals for the *elective criteria* (maximum total of 10 points) to the absolute score. (The maximum score for all five criteria would be 100 points).