

# Annual Sponsored Awards 2026

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## Juror Statement

When jurying an art exhibition, I try to distance myself from my personal tastes and instead focus on the artist's intention and how fully they commit to it. Taking this approach opens up a wider range of possibilities and hopefully creates a more level playing field for the exhibiting artists. This year's exhibition included a strong range of work that moved between humor, observation, abstraction, technical control and experimentation.



**Best in Show** was awarded to Miggs Burroughs for “Puppetry,” a playful and provocative lenticular photograph that comments on race relations while asking viewers to consider whether the puppet’s behavior is really an extension of the puppet master. In **Acrylics and Oils**, 1st Place went to Michael Brennecke’s “Black Forest,” a small but powerful abstract painting with subtle surface treatment and suggestive content that rewards close inspection. 2nd Place was awarded to Max Wiesen’s “The Raven,” a portrait of a proud but mischievous raven painted with confidence and directness without becoming overly fussy. Gretchen Bruno’s “Simply Elliot” received 3rd Place for its compelling contrast between punk rebellion and approachable warmth, while Gwendolyn Morris earned an Honorable Mention for “Two Peruvian Men,” a painting whose expressive brushwork and sense of closeness suggest genuine friendship and connection.

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In **Photography and Sculpture**, 1st Place went to Richard Ventre's "ROBYN/THE FLAG. Victory, Gallantly Streaming," an image filled with theatrical spontaneity that feels humorous, contemporary and classical at the same time. Brooke Sessions' "Carnival Chaos" captured 2nd Place through its oversaturated neon colors and dramatic low point of view that transform the Ferris wheel into a monumental nighttime spectacle. Barbara Soares received 3rd Place for "Wonderland of Gong: Cosmic Rabbit Hole," a digitally manipulated work that creates an odd and abstracted environment that pulls viewers in and encourages them to stay and investigate. Emily Kelting's "Japanese Garden in the Mist" earned Honorable Mention for creating a quiet moment of tranquility and peace.

In **Drawings, Mixed Media, Watercolor, Pastels, Prints, and Collage**, Kathy Draper's "Weaving" took 1st Place for its dense and layered patterns woven into a rhythmic whole pulsing with possibilities. Judy Katz's minimalist watercolor "Cow Pasture Pier" earned 2nd Place for its confident execution and disciplined restraint. Joe Dermody's "Harmonic Chill Out" received 3rd Place for its cool and detached digitally influenced beach scene whose lack of human presence adds to its artificial calm. Laura Bowman's "The Parrot Told Him Everything" earned Honorable Mention for its playful and whimsical dreamlike atmosphere.

*Joseph Fucigna received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Alfred University School of Art and Design and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the School of Visual Arts. He also attended the Triangle Workshop in Pine Plains, New York, where he worked with renowned sculptor Sir Anthony Caro and critic Clement Greenberg.*

*Fucigna is currently a Professor of Art and Chair of the Visual Arts Program at Norwalk Community College. He has also taught in the Art Department at Stony Brook University. He lives and works in Weston, Connecticut.*