Second Prize - $750

Rhonda Libbey

Mermaid

Oil and gold leaf

This oil and gold leaf painting was created in 2015 and was Libbey’s first successful expression of her current painting and illustration style.

Juror’s comment: “This one surprised me because in general, I am not interested in mermaid imagery. The figure is beautifully rendered, the composition moves the viewer through the space, and the decorative quality of the surface make it an image you come back to. It also links to an earlier era in illustration and art history.”

Juror’s Statement

Illustration is always about the audience. Great illustration moves us to connect to texts, products and ideas. My focus while adjudicating this exhibition was to help put together a showcase of illustration for the audience. Not only was I looking for the best art, but I was also trying to show the field of illustration in its widest range. This exhibition shows us current trends, different applications on the commercial side and work that links back to the history of American illustration.

Brian Fencl,
Professor of Art / Chair, College of Arts and Communication, West Liberty University

First Prize - $1000

Keith Bastianini

The Listeners

Giclée print of digital composition

The Listeners was inspired by Cornell University astronomer Frank Drake and his pioneering search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI) – Project Ozma. The project, begun in 1960 at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory at Green Bank, West Virginia, sought signs of life in distant planetary systems through interstellar radio waves.

Juror’s comment: “This piece is an amazing work of composition and design. The scale changes in the piece and the rendering of the surface is excellent. What sets it apart is how it suggests so many stories and activates the viewer’s imagination. A great work of storytelling.”

Third Prize - $500

Andrew Pappas

Magician’s Alley

Giclée print of graphite with digital color

Magician’s Alley is an old Victorian street set in a historical fantasy world. It is located somewhere along, or in the vicinity of, Smallman Street in Pittsburgh. Its exact location is unknown, for it teleports its location daily. On Magician’s Alley, magicians (legitimate or otherwise) peddle their magical and/or pseudo-magical products to the good, but gullible, citizens of western Pennsylvania.

Juror’s comment: “This image is layered and full of energy. I admire the attention to detail and how the story is told through multiple focal points.”

Popular Vote - $300

Lindsay Wright

Pollinators and Seeds

Poster created with Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign

This is the Pollinator Partnership’s 2018 poster, aimed at promoting the health of pollinators through conservation, education and research. The poster shows the supporting wildlands essential to North America’s diverse native food supply.
Co-chair’s Statement

Oglebay Institute’s Stifel Fine Arts Center was the place to be on Thursday, September 5th, with the opening reception of PSI’s Collective Works exhibit — a display of our society’s versatility in today’s modern-day illustration market. Sponsored by United Bank of West Virginia, with financial assistance from the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History and the National Endowment for the Arts, our exhibit showcased traditional ways of working alongside newer techniques and applications.

40 PSI members contributed to fill the two-story gallery space of the historical Edemar Mansion with over 70 pieces of personal and commissioned art. 53 juried works decorated the main spaces of the upper and lower levels surrounding the grand staircase, and approximately 20 examples of illustration applied to products filled the smaller room on the upper level.

Food and refreshments were available throughout the evening with the ballroom assembled for dining and mingling, a bartender and two thoughtful surprises for our membership: a gorgeous cake with PSI’s logo and the added ambience of a violinist. Stifel knows how to make a group feel welcome!

The mansion itself is a beautiful space and attendees paused in their tours of the exhibit only briefly to hear appreciative remarks about our collection and society from Stifel’s Director Rick Morgan and Director of Exhibitions Michael McKowen, followed by PSI President Lindsay Wright with information about PSI, an expression of thanks for the Art Center’s team and for our PSI volunteers and exhibitors, and the announcement of our exhibition award winners.

First Prize was awarded to Keith Bastianini for his digital composition, The Listeners. Second Prize went to Rhonda Libbey for her oil and gold leaf painting, Mermaid. And Andrew Pappas received Third Prize for his graphite and digital color scene, Magician’s Alley.

Juror Brian Fencl of West Liberty State University was kind enough to provide a written statement regarding his 3 choices, and it was a treat to get some insight into the jury process.

Group photos were taken on the grand staircase by Alex Patho as well as during the cake cutting by board and committee members. Near the end of the evening, votes were tallied for the People’s Choice Award, and Lindsay Wright’s botanical poster, Pollinators and Seeds, secured the win.

This exhibit was a wonderful opportunity for PSI to collaborate with a thriving arts organization and to educate our neighbors in Wheeling on our presence and profession with a generous 7-week run.

Molly Thompson
Co-Chair
The Collective Works of PSI

Thanks to Michael McKowen, Curator of Exhibitions and Screenings, Stifel Fine Arts Center. His generosity, expertise and attention to detail made The Collective Works exhibit a fantastic show and a breeze for PSI’s exhibit volunteers to manage.

This video of the awards ceremony at the September 5 Opening Reception with Michael McKowen presiding reflects his enthusiasm for our show.

Photo Gallery

Members shared snapshots taken at the opening reception and awards ceremony held at the fabulous Stifel Gallery the evening of Thursday, September 5.

Photographs: John Blumen, Gina Judy, Anni Matsick, Jim Mellett, Alex Patho Jr.
PSI’s members are widely talented and work in a variety of traditional and nontraditional art forms no longer limited to commercial illustration. Its membership has quickly evolved, like many illustrators around the United States, to find additional markets for artwork as avenues beyond the printed page have opened up.

Modern illustrators are capitalizing on the growing variety of ways to create and market their retail images directly, making their work more accessible to larger audiences. Markets where illustrators are now selling directly to the public include: festivals; online sites like Etsy and FineArtAmerica that sell everything from coffee mugs and T-shirts to posters, prints and originals; stationery and greeting cards; public art commissions such as murals and installations; mobile apps and games; self-published books; and more!

What Do Illustrators Do?

The Pittsburgh Society of Illustrators has an educational mission surrounding many of its exhibitions; in the case of the Collective Works exhibit, PSI hopes to educate its audience as to how illustrators traditionally work and how they have recently explored nontraditional media and venues.

Illustrators are artists that are comfortable with narrative communication, and they utilize various means to do so: drawing, painting, collage, prints, video, animation, 3D rendering, etc.

Illustration work, in the professional sense, is the commission to create an image that will be combined with other elements, such as text or other graphics, and then disseminated to its target audience by broadcast, print, internet or other display methods. Working illustrators must be adept at problem-solving, exchanging ideas, developing concepts and visualizing ahead of time how their work will appear in its final context.

The style of each illustration is determined by the artist’s own desire for self-expression, the concept that the art must convey and the medium best suited for the task at hand.
These artists understand composition and design at a deep level, are skilled with their chosen media and are amazing visual storytellers.

Brian Fencl, Juror
Working with a traditional studio media or with digital tools these illustrators have the ability to move the audience.

Brian Fencl, Juror

* Additional gallery display of commissioned products including books, wine labels, collector plates, etc.
Photo Gallery continued
Excerpts from PSI President’s opening remarks . . .

It is my great honor and privilege to be serving as the current President of the Pittsburgh Society of Illustrators. Established as a 501(c)3 organization in 1997, the PSI aims to cultivate and strengthen the profile of the illustration art form, by fostering a closer social and professional connection among illustrators in the Pittsburgh area. Now the second largest society of illustrators in the United States, PSI is comprised of illustrators and affiliate members from a wide variety of specialties. Our invaluable network of skilled and friendly professionals, gather to talk shop, share techniques, collaborate, educate, and always have a great time together!

The Collective Works of the Pittsburgh Society of Illustrators is a survey show designed to showcase the versatility of our members’ artistic talents. The goal of the Collective Works exhibit is to highlight the spectrum of modern-day illustration by answering the question: How is the profession of illustration evolving in today’s market? As you walk through this 2-part exhibit, think of how an illustrator creates a narrative, and how sometimes that narrative goes beyond the art piece and into the function of an object. This show exhibits the problem-solving abilities and unrestrained creativity of our membership.

Over 160 pieces were originally submitted by more than 60 members of the PSI for the juror’s consideration. We would like to thank Brian Fencil of West Liberty State University, for being the juror of the selected 53 pieces by 38 of our members. Also a big thank you to our PSI members who volunteered to drive all the show pieces here, Fred Carlson, Molly Thompson, John Blumen, and Leda Miller. A very special thanks to Molly and John, as the Co-Chairs of the PSI Exhibits Committee. There is no way this show would have happened without you, from the very beginning of the idea, writing the prospectus, and handling the exhibit labels, thank you so much Molly and John. We would also like to thank everyone at Stifel, especially Director Michael McKowen, for hosting this exhibit and for this wonderful opening reception. And of course, thank you to all the PSI members who submitted artwork. Thank you for joining us and please take your time enjoying the exhibit.

Lindsay Wright
President, Pittsburgh Society of Illustrators
Rick Antolic
Dave & Andy’s
Oil on canvas

After honing his oil painting skills as an illustrator, Antolic began exploring a series of images of the Pittsburgh area relating to personal, distant memories, usually showing a quiet solitude. By leaving out people and automobiles, this image captures a more ambiguous point in time, allowing the viewer to relive their own memories of the specific location.

Keith Bastianini
Autumn Frolic
Giclée print of digital composition

A wee bit of pagan revelry during a harvest time celebration, marking the close of summer and welcoming autumn.

Liz Beaty
Amazing Adventures
Giclée print of mixed media

This piece was created as part of a gallery collection of work inspired by the author Jules Verne. Paying tribute to Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea, it combines the fantastical imagery of Verne’s writing with the whimsical approach of Beaty’s work.

Ashley Belote
It Wasn’t Me...
Print of digital illustration

Who isn’t guilty of having a midnight snack? Created in response to Belote’s ice cream addiction and her tendency to leave evidence behind, this piece is a reminder to enjoy the little things in life.

Ashley Belote
Wildlife Viewing Area
Print of digital illustration

“Where are the deer?” - A common question among wildlife enthusiasts everywhere. Oftentimes we are overlooking something that is right within our reach.

Mark Bender
Pittsburgh in Motion
Giclée print of digital artwork

Working with Gas Light Creative of Minnesota, Bender was commissioned to create a campaign image for a national transportation convention hosted in Pittsburgh titled “Rail-Volution.” Bender’s challenge was to incorporate everything from rail to autonomous vehicles within one scene representative of the city. This is an alternate, limited color version.

Mark Bender
Sunday in the Park
Giclée print of digital artwork

A summer in Pittsburgh will inevitably include an afternoon at PNC Park. The food and beverages along with the city view can outshine the team on the field. This piece was commissioned as the cover for Pittsburgh Quarterly Magazine, whose art director, Jen McNulty, encourages unique perspectives and uses of our skyline.

John Blumen
Cosmos
Digital painting on canvas

A new work of Blumen’s that combines his personal digital paintings with his long-held interest in wood-working. This limited edition digital painting is produced on archival canvas with archival inks and then finished with multiple coats of varnish for protection and durability. The custom architectural wooden frame complements the style and subject of the image, creating a combination of two- and three-dimensional art.

John Blumen
Pursued
Digital painting on canvas

This surreal depiction of dreams is the first in a planned series of limited-edition digital paintings by Blumen, inspired by the universal subject of dreams.

April Brust
Birth Injury: Medical Legal Case for Defense
Print of digital illustration

These panels are designed for the defense in the case of Goguen et al. v. Crowe 1987. It was claimed the physician wrongfully caused injury with forceps. The defense countered that intervention was necessary to prevent progression into a dangerous delivery position; furthermore, fetal-maternal cephalopelvic disproportion created inherent fracture risk. Other contributing illustrators include Sonia Seto and Maria Spyridis.

April Hartmann
Alone Time
Giclée print of mixed media digital art

April Hartmann is a member of the worldwide organization Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI). SCBWI hosts a monthly contest for illustrators and promotes two winners to publishers and agents through their national e-newsletter. Hartmann created this winning piece for the May 2019 prompt, “Alone.”

Thomas Hoover
Bathing Nude
Canvas print of digital painting

Capturing the essence of an athlete has been a focus of Hoover’s work. He has been working for Adidas and Reebok for several years. This piece illustrates one of his favorite and most dynamic players in the NFL, Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs.

Frederick H. Carlson
The Blues of Robert Johnson
Giclée print of watercolor, ink and gouache on Strathmore board

This illustration was commissioned by Fur Peace Ranch, a Pomeroy, Ohio guitar camp and performance venue, along with instructor Tom Feldman, for usage in promoting the workshop in print and on the web. It also appears on posters and book and binder covers for the event. The owner of the camp is former Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna guitarist Jorma Kaukonen and his wife, Vanessa.

Frederick H. Carlson
Sonny Boy Williamson II
Giclée Print of watercolor, ink and gouache on Strathmore board

One of five portraits of all-time famous Chicago blues harmonica players, commissioned by Chicago blues fans connected by social media with the illustrator. The original print run was bought by the commissioning parties and the image continues to be sold on Carlson’s online retail poster store.

Thomas Hoover
America’s Past, Present & Future
Acrylic

This painting depicts some of the past, present, and future uniforms of the U.S. Army. George hand-delivered this painting, along with 3,000 posters, to The U.S. Army Land Combat Expo 2002 in Heidelberg, Germany just nine days after 9/11. All 3,000 posters were gone the first day of the three-day expo.

Frederick H. Carlson
Cosmos
Giclée print of mixed media

This piece was created as part of a planned series of limitededitions by Carlson, inspired by the universal subject of dreams.

Liz Beatty
A new work of Beatty’s imagery of Verne’s writing with the whimsical approach of Beatty’s work.
Karl Huber

Rest for the Wicked
Watercolor on paper

This image is based on the character Wormwood from the CS Lewis novel The Screwtape Letters.

Karl Huber

Coelophysis
Watercolor on paper

Coelophysis was a small dinosaur which lived during the late Triassic in what is now the southwest United States. It is relatively well known from several large fossil deposits found in that area.

Bernadette Kazmarski

Paths I Have Walked
Pastel

The title is meant both literally, since the artist explored nearby countryside from the time she could walk, and figuratively, as she went through life. For reference, she planned a series of photos of herself walking through a favorite section of woods resembling a green cathedral.

Bernadette Kazmarski

CArtyst for Clues
Pastel

This illustration for book 25 of a cozy cat mystery series shows the main cat character interacting with other animal subjects on a farm as described by the author. All photo references were Kazmarski’s own, taken on her friend’s farm.

Larry Klukaszewski

#BigBen
Prismacolor on illustration board

In 2004, the Pittsburgh Steelers drafted Ben Roethlisberger to be their QB. Since then, he has become a 2X Super Bowl Champion, a 6X Pro Bowl, and a 2X NFL Passing Leader. Larry Klu’s #BigBen is a tribute to this remarkable superstar of the Steel City.

Ed Kuehn

Creepin’ While You’re Sleepin’
Giclée print of digital illustration

Never forget to let your mind wander; there is no telling what you might find along your journey. One of Kuehn’s favorite things to do is wander. He has become skilled at conceptualizing and creating places and things that often cannot be found in this world.

Naomi Lees-Maiberg

Tell It to the Bees
Ink, red thread and beads on recycled teabag

The “Telling of the Bees” is a traditional European custom in which bees are told of important household events (births, marriages, deaths). Ancient Jewish sacred scroll miniature art inspired Lees-Maiberg to use teabags - instant tiny parchments - mixing ancient traditions with personal interpretations of sacred texts. Women are not typically acceptable scribes for religious artifacts.

Rhonda Libbey

I’ll Fly Away
Oil and gold leaf

This oil and gold leaf painting was created in 2017 for an illustrated book Libbey is working on. It is a whimsical and symbolic expression of the transformative nature of dreams.

Ron Magnes

A Geek’s Lair
Print of digital illustration

Fantasy has always been a very popular genre in the movie landscape. This sci-fi enthusiast’s space exaggerates that point. “This was such a fun project because I’m a bit of a sci-fi geek myself,” Magnes stated.

Ron Mahoney

The Godfather
Acrylics

Ron has always been interested in The Godfather movies and is a big fan of Al Pacino. He decided to do this illustration of Al Pacino as The Godfather with his bodyguard, Al Neri, in a meeting with corrupt congressman Pat Geary. Mahoney thought the warm overhead lighting was very interesting.

Anni Matsick

Red
Watercolor on Fabriano SP

Finalist, Society of Children’s Writers & Illustrators 2016 Tomie dePaola award. Tomie’s prompt: “One of the biggest and most important challenges the Children’s Book Illustrator faces is the UNIQUE VISUALIZATION of the MAIN CHARACTER. Your task is to make me FALL IN LOVE with your illustration and especially with Red Riding Hood. I want to “meet her” for the first time.

James Mellett

Pittsburgh Sports Skyline (triptych)
Watercolor, gouache and colored pencil

Mellett’s artwork illustrates the effect sports teams and venues have had on the evolution of our city skyline. He has included images of the city’s popular sports stars, many of whom were born in the Pittsburgh area, as well as the stadiums and arenas with the Pittsburgh skyline as the backdrop.

Mike F. Miller

Unsupervised Magic
Giclée print of digital painting

Unsupervised Magic exhibits that tender age of adolescence where one may feel too old to play with toys but imagination and curiosity are still running wild. The piece depicts a boy sneaking off to the attic to try his hand at magic and, much to his surprise, having it work.

Mike F. Miller

Trick-Or-Treat
Giclée print of digital painting

Trick-Or-Treat brings new meaning to “Devil’s Night.” Created around Halloween, this piece plays on the idea of a young demon boy being able to show his true self in a town that’s not the most accepting of him.

Leda Miller

Under Thatch Cover
Watercolor on plate bristol

Nestled among the pine straw, the kits sleep peacefully, unaware of the dangers that run close by. With this scene Miller illustrates our own vulnerability to the “dogs” in our world, but in a way that preserves serenity and beauty.

Jeanine Murch

Dance or Leave
Acrylic painting on wooden panel

Inspired by a postcard Murch found in New Orleans with the saying, “Dance or Leave,” she created this whimsical piece shortly after buying her first home. It hangs in the front entryway to welcome guests in a fun and creative way.
William Panos
Who’s Afraid of the SAT?
Egg tempera
Many college-bound high school students experience trepidation when faced with the “big bad wolf” SAT. This illustration supported a magazine article that outlined methods to help them prepare for the test.

Kurt Pfaff
Reflect
Oil on canvas
Reflect is an examination of self examination. The journey through life is awash with doubt and uncertainty. One can sometimes be compelled to second guess the myriad of decisions made. This painting demonstrates that moment we all have faced at one time or another. Did I do the right thing?

Jim Prokell
Bobby Jones
Watercolor on 300# Arches rough watercolor paper
In 1930, Bobby Jones became the first man to win what is known as the golf Grand Slam by winning the four major tournaments of his time in a single year. Prokell’s Bobby Jones is one of a series of five watercolors of classic golfers, created as part of a suite of signed, limited-edition lithographs.

Gary Ritchie
Cal U Dorm Rooms
Digital print of 3D illustration
Three of the six floor plans illustrated for a local university brochure. Furniture was modeled from photographs supplied by the client.

Gary Ritchie, Lyon Ritchie, LLC
Dorm Room Explorer
Interactive 3D experience, web browser
Internal project to answer the question, “Can an interactive illustration replace static images, while providing more information?” Experience formatted for desktop and mobile devices.

Rachel Arnold Sager
Robots
Digital artwork, screen printed by hand on cotton T-shirt
Sometimes inspiration comes from making what you can’t find – “Robots” was created when Sager was shopping for her young daughter and realized there weren’t any good robot shirts for her to choose from. Positive and friendly, this work is a celebration of robots and all the kids that love them.

Rachel Arnold Sager
Bugs
Digital artwork, screen printed by hand on cotton T-shirt
Not all kids like bugs… but some REALLY like bugs! Insects don’t get featured much on youth apparel, so Sager made this gender-neutral shirt for her company 2468 Kids. It gives any child with a growing passion for those creepy-crawlies a way to celebrate it.

George Schill
Are You Drinking to Excess?
Giclée print of acrylics on masking tape
This illustration accompanied a Hair Brain Shooter recipe for the Pittsburgh Society of Illustrators drink directory. The directory was a promotional print piece of mixed drink recipes, featuring art by PSI members, and its production coincided with the 2011 exhibit Drawing Under the Influence.

Dan Senneway
Up All Night
Giclée print digital hand-drawn illustration
Senneway’s first ever attempt of drawing star trails. Dealing with insomnia for over half a year gave him the inspiration behind this illustration.

Dan Senneway
The Night We Slept in the Shed
Giclée print digital hand-drawn illustration
Senneway tends to focus his stories on personal events. This particular story is a special one, as a constant reminder of his friends from childhood and the last night they spent together.

Christine Swann
Bound
Pastel on Sennelier LaCarte
Pastel on Sennelier LaCarte
This image represents the restrictions we put on ourselves. Caught up in limitations, we can be our own worst enemy.

Molly Thompson
Risk
Giclée print of graphite with digital color
Often scary but always rewarding, freelance illustration is a risky business! Thompson created this piece when she started her company. It has hung in her workspace for years and is a constant reminder to say yes to new challenges and never get too comfortable.

Bill Vrscak
Buddy and Homesick
Watercolor
This is a piece created from two separate photos of Buddy Moss and Homesick James. It was done when Vrscak was doing work with Mellon Bank when they were sponsoring the Jazz Festival in downtown Pittsburgh. The painting was never used as a promotional piece.

Bill Vrscak
North Shore Renovation
Watercolor on oil paper
Vrscak created this image from a black and white photo he took about fifty years ago and rediscovered recently. The scene is an area of the north side of Pittsburgh when Three Rivers Stadium was under construction.

Phil Wilson
Giraffatitan
Acrylic on hot press board
Giraffatitan was an African species of Brachiosaurus that stood 39 feet tall, was up to 85 feet long, and lived during the late Jurassic period.

Phil Wilson
Survival in the Cretaceous Seas
Acrylic on hot press board
This piece depicts the constant struggle for food and survival during the “Age of Reptiles.” Everything was both predator and prey.

Ilene Winn-Lederer
Real Connoisseurs Collect Illustration
Screen printed T-shirt
This illustration was designed in 2013 for the online T-shirt company Threadless. It employs Winn-Lederer’s original alphabet Garrulous. Gothic in visualizing the notion that brilliant illustration can be as fine an art form as any that draws art collectors to international art fairs.

When you see an image you like go to the illustrator’s website and get a fuller picture of what they are capable of.

Brian Fencl, Juror