

I welcomed the opportunity to jury this exhibit. The subject of water is near and dear to my heart. It has been and will remain a core element in all of my work.

Water is a fascinating and important subject with many dimensions to explore. With its ever-changing surface reflecting shimmering light and its crystalline depths that hold light within, water resembles a living thing. Water is the sustainer of life. We can survive only minutes without air, days without water, weeks without food. Though some organisms have adapted to living with extremely little water, without water life as we know it cannot exist. The blood in our bodies are chemically most similar to the waters of the ocean currents. The hydrologic cycle is the circulatory system of Gaia. Water is essential to wilderness and agriculture alike. Water use and access to clean water has become a growing global concern, and it will continue to become increasingly so. In a world where desertification, overpopulation, and health are acute issues, water availability, quality and use have become core issues. Water brings purification, renewal and fruition. It's used in countless ancient spiritual practices and healing rites and in modern therapeutic treatments both physical and psychological. Water is entertaining. Who doesn't like to play with and in water?

With such a rich and complex theme it's not surprising that the entries for this exhibit were so diverse. The images spanned the gamut of human responses to a single theme - documentary, graphic, impressionistic, clinical, avante-garde, romantic, personal. This made it almost impossible to select images based on a single focus or to break them into groups of separate subthemes within the larger theme and at the same time evaluate images based on their strengths as individual images rather than illustrating a point. The results are a kaleidoscopic survey of possibilities.

There were approximately 2,300 images submitted. Fully half were unremarkable. The top 100 were remarkable. The top 50 better still. The top 25 even better. The top 10 truly exceptional. Singling out only 3 and 1 was tremendously challenging.

As much as I've tried to be balanced and fair, my personal sensibility is reflected in this selection, especially when selecting between closely matched candidates. I'm delighted there is a Director's selection as well as a Juror's selection. I agree with those selections and I'm delighted those images were also highlighted. Many other images merit

Looking at work intensely raises many questions.

Does a good idea make a good picture?

Does the relevance social concerns make up for, compliment, or overtake a good picture?

Does clearly describing a person, place, thing, or event make a good picture?

Does a strong graphic structure make a good picture?

Does a strong emotional appeal make a good picture?

Are decisive moments magic moments?

How much is enough?

How much is too much?

How much is too little?

How much do small flaws reduce core strengths?

What are the core strengths of an image?

How are core strengths combined with and modified by other elements?

When does abstraction become suggestive or storied?

How do those vary from image to image and artist to artist?

Are there consistent strategies that work?

Are the notable exceptions?

Does the challenge presented by outliers reinforce or weaken what's been found?

These are among a few of the questions I kept in mind while enjoying this work.

I invite you to do the same.

John Paul Caponigro