

# Breaking Out

We're delighted to present the 15 emerging artists whose work took awards in the **3rd Annual Artists to Watch Art Competition**. The diverse group proves that there are no boundaries when it comes to age, style and subject matter. Talent is talent, pure and simple, and we're honored to share it with you here. Congratulations to our 2024 winners! **COMPILED BY BETH WILLIAMS**



## *Abstract/ Experimental*

FIRST PLACE

**Angela Tang**

Shanghai, China

**A Second** (colored pencil, gouache and pen on paper, 19x15)

I wanted to express the existence of time, but because it doesn't have shape and color, I imagined a scene in which a swirl wipes away objects such as flowers and bricks. The swirl, located in the lower part of the painting, and the objects, located in the upper portion, are unseen. I wanted to create a sense of urgency and fragmentation, coupled with the swirl. I determined that an intricate Gothic clock would best represent time, which I drew with colored pencils and then cut into pieces. I arranged the pieces into a shape that represents the swirl and the passage of time. The title of the work underscores the theme of a fleeting moment and evokes a sense of urgency.



**ABOUT ME:** *I'm a high school senior and recently completed my AP art classes and portfolio. I'm generally self-taught and enjoy working with multiple media, such as watercolor, colored pencil and pen, in mixed-media works.*

## SECOND PLACE Indee Moss

Ames, Iowa

**Morning Dreams** (acrylic on canvas, 36x24)

I paint evocative abstracts inspired by nature that capture a feeling or mood of a place or time of day. *Morning Dreams* conveys the quiet stillness as morning dawns and night retreats. I added texture to make it visually interesting, as well as to capture the different layers of paint. I layered cool blues and silver over gray and umber to make the blues pop, yet give a softness to the composition. As I was painting, I felt like I was looking out a window, lost in my thoughts and dreams. I wanted the soft hues of blues and silver to bring out that dreamlike abstraction—and to evoke a feeling of calm, tranquility and wonder.



**ABOUT ME:** *I have a doctoral degree in chemistry and a master's degree in accounting. After working in both academia and the corporate world, I'm now dedicated to my art full time. I'm mostly self-taught via online tutorials, books and hours at the easel.*



## THIRD PLACE Sydney Del Monte

Niagara Falls, New York

**Setting Sail** (acrylic on canvas, 20x16)

I'm inspired by acts of courage—the brave determination to set out into the unknown seeking adventure and purpose. Ships are a symbol of that for me, embodying the hopes and dreams of those on board. There's also something beautifully relatable in watching such magnificent giants set sail and become dwarfed by the ocean. I used wide brushes and wild strokes in this work to give the impression of salty winds and waves obscuring the view.



**ABOUT ME:** *I enjoyed art classes all through school and was accepted into the AP fine arts program in high school. Upon graduation, I attended film school in New York City, where I majored in cinematography.*

# Landscape/Cityscape



FIRST PLACE

**Aaron A. Lade**

Colorado Springs, Colorado

**Woodman East** (acrylic on canvas, 16x20)

This painting was a concept I had held in the back of my mind for quite some time. The odd-shaped barn was one of countless structures succumbing to gravity. I drove by it hundreds of times on a road surrounded by prairie. Even as the prairie became consumed by development and construction, the barn stood as a reminder of what was. Now both the barn and the grasslands are gone, so I painted the scene as a tribute to those silent reminders that some things can never be as they were. This was the first time I painted clouds with a palette knife, and I liked how it allowed the barn to remain the focus.



**ABOUT ME:** *I've been drawing for as long as I can remember. I tried watercolors in high school and stuck with those until trying acrylic a few years ago. I've had no formal training, and as far as an art journey, there really wasn't one. I enjoyed art, but never made it a pursuit. Fortunately, I made a Christmas card during college, which became an annual tradition.*

*Having decided to use my free time more wisely, my art now has a chance to develop.*

SECOND PLACE

**Michelle M. Garro**

Sudbury, Massachusetts

**Brewing Storm** (oil on linen panel, 18x24)

*Brewing Storm* is based on a reference photo I took on Nantucket as a hurricane approached in September 2023. The title refers to both the literal impact of the storm and the tension and unknown impact it would have on my son's wedding the following day. Luckily, the storm cleared in time. My preferred working method is to paint subject matter en plein air, but capturing even a small, quick outdoor study was impossible that day. I was able to use information from my other wave studies to inform the photographic reference.



**ABOUT ME:** *I started taking art classes at a young age and continued throughout high school. After earning a business degree and spending more than a decade working in financial services, I returned to art and opened a studio to teach drawing and painting. I enjoy the privilege of teaching students who, in turn, teach me so much.*

*My goal is to paint full time in the near future.*



**ABOUT ME:** *I'm a self-taught artist. I loved to draw when I was growing up, and I painted in watercolor in my early twenties. The works were dreadfully dull, and it was 35 years before I returned to art. My mom gave me some Grumbacher pastels she had from the 1950s, and I've never looked back.*

THIRD PLACE

**Lynda Baxter**

Stettler, Alberta, Canada

**Police Outpost Provincial Park** (pastel on sanded paper, 11x14)

Canada's Southern Alberta offers so much visible and hidden beauty, and that's where the inspiration for this nugget, *Police Outpost Provincial Park*, was found. It appears to be a well-kept secret that I luckily discovered while on an afternoon drive. The sun was high, and the wildflowers were everywhere. I couldn't wait to paint the scene, and I did. Then, I couldn't help but wonder what it would look like at dusk with a sinking sun, so I created my version of that using pastels—no blending, just layers over layers of thin color. The more I painted, the more I wanted to visit the scene in the evening to enjoy the changing light. That never happened, but I believe this is what I would have encountered.

# Portrait/Figure

FIRST PLACE

## Sarah Goldfinch

Port Douglas,  
Queensland, Australia

**Serene** (oil on cradled timber panel, 11¾x7¾)

*Serene* is a piece I began while under the mentorship of artist Arthur Gain, who provided the reference photo for this painting. I challenged myself to see and represent colors in the transitions, as well as play with textures and edges. I often work from life, but sometimes trying new ideas or concepts can be done more easily when using reference photos. I approached the composition with a block-in and underpainting to determine values, while balancing features and proportions to suit. I manipulated the shadow shapes to better illustrate form; to act as support for the areas of focus; and to draw attention to the facial expression. This piece is a turning point for my work, as I seek to find my own perfect balance between realism and abstraction.



**ABOUT ME:** My art studies have largely been self-directed, although I have a background in design and illustration and have some classical training from Julian Ashton School of Art, in Sydney. I've also taken lots of workshops. I'm currently working through Grand Central Atelier's online core drawing program. So, I'm still a student focused on building my skills at the moment, all the while brewing ideas for how my art will unfold.



## SECOND PLACE

**Derek McClure**

Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

**No Anchovies** (graphite on watercolor paper, 8½x5¾)

*No Anchovies* is part of a larger collection from my 2023 solo exhibition, “First-World Problems: Portraits in Graphite.” Each portrait was an expression or representation of a first-world problem. The original title for this portrait was *Moments Before Discovering a Rogue Anchovy*. The inspiration behind it—and the others—is simply a love of drawing and creating expressive images that make people smile.



**ABOUT ME:** *I have a visual arts design education degree and a jazz performance music degree with honors. I’m a husband and father of two who teaches art part-time to middle school students and owns a photography business. I play music, create videos and partake in a number of other creative pursuits. I enjoy the idea of drawing famous people. Not knowing any famous people personally, I exercise my skill with graphite on family and friends in the hopes that they will one day, in fact, become famous.*

## THIRD PLACE

**Marissa Madonna**Wilmington,  
North Carolina**Ballerina in Blue** (acrylic  
and colored pencil on  
board, 15¾x12)

I’ve always been inspired by the beauty and elegance of dance. Some of my best childhood memories are from dance, and I’ve recently moved back into ballet as an adult. I find the artistry and discipline incredibly relatable to the work that I create as a visual artist. One of the things I was thinking about while creating this piece is how people can convey emotions through both artwork

and dance. This piece was made using acrylic ink and colored pencil—a mixed-media approach I learned from Bill Thomson, my illustration mentor. What I love most is how the piece is slowly built up in alternating layers of ink and pencil to create value and richness. Working this way combines the freedom and boldness of painting with the delicacy and control of drawing.



**ABOUT ME:** *I’ve loved to draw and create since I was very young, but I never really pursued it until my junior year of high school. I knew that I had found my calling and graduated from Hartford Art School with a B.F.A. in illustration, in 2012. I made many meaningful connections there, which have continued to guide and support me on my journey as a professional artist. My projects have included children’s book illustrations, private portrait commissions, sports illustration for ESPN television features and, most recently, illustrations for Hartford Symphony Orchestra’s yearly concert series, “Tales of Halloween.”*



# Still Life/Floral/Interior

FIRST PLACE

**Mark  
McDermott**

Vancouver, British Columbia,  
Canada

**Preserve** (oil on panel, 14x12)

*Preserve* is as much a self-portrait as it is a still life. It represents what we once had as children and what most of us lose—the magic of imagination, play, youthful spirit and joy. This is why it's so important to keep, to preserve. I loved capturing all of the complexities of this subject, such as how colors and shapes are refracted in the letters on the jar. I draw each composition directly onto prepared panel. Considering the amount of detail, I try to work out most of the composition before I start painting. This helps me keep track of where I am within the piece as I work.



#### **ABOUT ME:**

*I received a diploma in graphic design and illustration, which has translated to a career path in graphic design and art direction. I was several years into my profession when my friend Kimberly suggested I try oil painting. Given that my educational background hadn't touched much on the medium, I started learning the techniques of the Dutch Masters. After a few years, I took a break and only picked it up again about five years ago. I decided to paint in a more hyper-realistic manner. Every time I sit down to paint, I consider it a learning opportunity.*

## SECOND PLACE

**Lara Restelli**

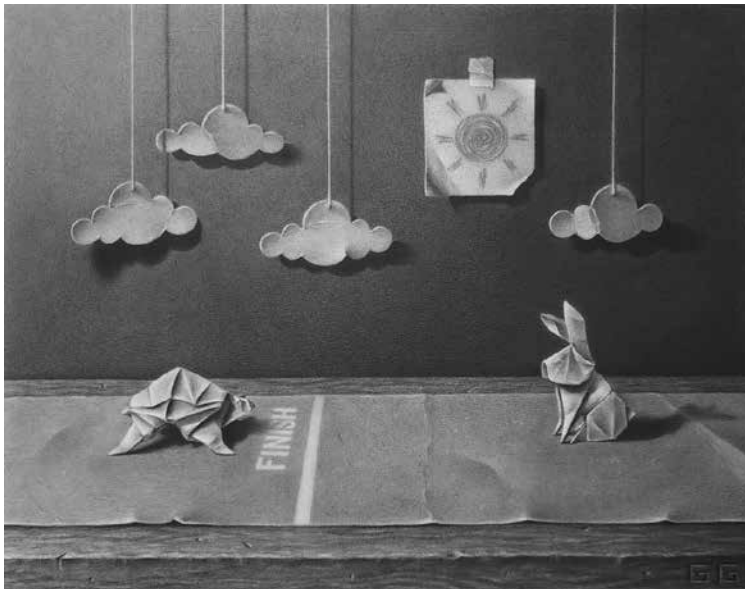
Miami, Florida

**Rocks in a Box: Black and White** (oil on canvas, 18x24x3)

Precious stones have been my primary subject matter for the last several years. The “Rocks in a Box” series highlights different stones and crystals in a contained space, allowing me to experiment with color, contrast and composition to evoke specific feelings. In the case of *Black and White*, I created a composition using black-and-white stones and delicate hints of red. The strong, sophisticated color palette is intended to make the viewer feel grounded and confident, soothed and balanced. Each painting in the series includes a sample of the stones featured in the work, which holds the intention for that piece. For example, a white howlite helps relieve stress, a red jasper encourages groundedness and a tiger eye helps with clarity.



**ABOUT ME:** I'm a Miami-based artist educated in the classical European school of realism at Alberto Pancorbo's atelier. I completed the atelier program at Miami International Fine Arts.



**ABOUT ME:** I've been an artist since I was old enough to pick up crayons. I graduated from Russell Sage College, in Albany, N.Y., with an associate's degree in fine art/illustration. I like to spend my time creating origami, as well as drawing and oil painting, working mostly on portraits and still life.

## THIRD PLACE

**Glenn Gela**

Cohoes, New York

**Slow and Steady** (graphite and oil charcoal pencil on paper, 11x14)

During the pandemic, I revisited the art of origami and created an extensive collection of paper animals. While beginning work on a still life drawing, I realized that I could use my origami to tell a story. From there I thought of Aesop's Fables, which inspired this drawing, as well as others. *Slow and Steady* is based on the story about the tortoise and the hare, and I created objects in the still-life setup from paper. I used matte graphite pencils to create the mid-tones and lighter tones, blending them with a paintbrush. I drew the dark shadow areas with black oil charcoal pencil and created the highlights with erasers to reveal the white paper.

# Animal/Wildlife



FIRST PLACE

**Elise Mahaffie**

Teton Village, Wyoming

**Dusky Bugler** (oil on canvas, 18x18)

*Dusky Bugler* is inspired from living in Jackson, Wyoming, where there's an abundance of opportunities to view wildlife. There are anywhere from 140,000 to 180,000 elk in this ecosystem, and every spring and fall they go on the move. My family and I often head into Grand Teton National Park to look and listen for bull elk in rut, as well as small herds moving to the high country or to the local elk refuges. They're most active early in the day and at dusk, which is what inspired the title for my painting. My intention was to paint the elk with cool colors to evoke the feeling of evening. As in the majority of my pieces, I'm always interested in exploring how the negative space draws attention to the subject.



**ABOUT ME:**

*I attended Syracuse University and studied*

*advertising design. I started painting later in life and then enrolled in a three-year art program to develop my skills. I continue to take workshops from artists who inspire me, as I believe that learning never ends.*

## SECOND PLACE Brett Mistak

Maryville, Tennessee

**Scratch** (oil on canvas, 36x36)

I became friends with Rick Kratz, a local bear photographer. Before even seeing the reference photo, I had been toying with the idea of painting a black bear against a dark background. Scratch, the bear cub here, was given the name because she was often spotted trailside, scratching her belly. I usually work in a realistic style, so, to date, I've learned the most from finishing this piece—understanding lines and flow and how, if they're not rendered properly, the eye gets a little stressed. It taught me that if you're going to be detailed, then be detailed. It was also my first time painting wiry-type fur, which helped in discovering new techniques for using thin layers over an initial application of paint. I enlarged the eyes three or four times throughout the process, since the dark background makes them—and the snout—the focal point.



**ABOUT ME:** *I received a bachelor's degree in fine art with a focus in Illustration at Carson-Newman College a long time ago, ha! Since I recently got back into art after 20-plus years, many of my skills have been self-taught. Where am I on my artistic journey? Consider this my floor; I only hope to improve and get better from here. Oddly enough, I just resigned from my 20-year job in veterinary sales, and I'll be launching my full-time art career in November.*



## THIRD PLACE Lynn Kibbe

Trout Run, Pennsylvania

**Mother's Patience** (diptych; scratchboard on panel, 12x16 each)

As a scratchboard artist, I typically do closeup work, but I've always admired artists who could capture scenes, so when I find an excellent reference photo that includes background and foreground, I like to incorporate it into the artwork. This reference by Amanda Priddy was one of my favorites. I knew I wanted to try a diptych, and this worked perfectly. The title is derived from the feeling of a mother's love. The painting and the title marry my love of wildlife with undeniable sentiment. 🐾



**ABOUT ME:** *I'm a self-taught artist. I started as a hobbyist working in oil, and then I added watercolors and dabbled in pastel. When I found scratchboard, I immediately knew that it would be the medium I loved the most.*

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