

## Juror's Statement

The medium of photography poses its own particular challenges and limitations, so it is always a delight to discover photographers who have found fresh approaches to them.

There was much to admire in this year's entries, which embraced a rich range of photographic processes and techniques. I have, by assignment, singled out a group of outstanding participants in this year's competition.

Several artists tackled the difficult challenge of working with traditional subject matter that is often considered beautiful but vacuous – trees and flowers. At their best, these subjects are far more than sentimental tokens of the natural world; they are rich in history, symbolism, and associations with human lives. Laurie Lambrecht's series *Lake Trees* is an especially graceful and eloquent interpretation of a familiar theme, showing how the descriptive can be allusive and revelatory. David Bookbinder's series of mandalas (a Buddhist image for meditation) focuses on individual blossoms -- whether the lowly dandelion or the exalted lily -- and invites us to become absorbed in their simplicity and complexity.

Turning from the idealized natural world to another classic genre – portraiture -- Justyna Badach photographs bachelor men in their personalized habitats, leaving us to interpret each individual based on his carefully constructed and apparently hermetic surroundings. Brian Shumway's portraits of children living inside a massive trash dump in Managua, Nicaragua, concentrates less on setting than on the personalities of his

subjects. Despite growing up in what most of us would consider horrific conditions, the artist shows the children as living relatively ordinary lives filled with family, friendships, pleasures, and frustrations. Andrea Land also photographs children at home, working primarily with young girls. Land photographs them in stark but unremarkable spaces, using their postures and expressions to convey that, while we may inhabit the same physical space, their interior lives and experiences are places we can only imagine.

Further exploring the life of the mind are Cyrus Karimipour and Bremner Benedict. In his series *Invented Memory*, Karimipour photographs constructed figures and montaged imagery to reflect the selective, fragmentary, and somewhat transitory quality of our mental landscapes. Benedict instead uses multiple exposures to imply the non-linear quality of our lived experiences. Her narrative project *Eurydice Dreams* refers to the Greek tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, which warns us about the risks of looking back and not letting go. Both artists use the mimetic nature of the photographic image to suggest the transitory scramble of recollections, thoughts, and feelings that is as much a part of human existence as conscious thought.

My very great thanks go to all the artists who submitted work to the competition and to my wonderful colleagues at the Griffin Museum of Photography.

- Katherine Ware
- Curator of Photographs, Philadelphia Museum of Art