

Juror's statement -Arthur Hash

Enamel is a vast, exploratory medium with many wonderful practitioners. There are the painterly compositions of Jamie Bennett, the graphic cloisonné of Aurélie Guillaume, the beautiful, sugar fired textures of Jessica Turell and the treasure troves of religious artifacts peppered with small enameled jewels. This medium and its techniques are difficult to master and many artists spend a lifetime focusing only on one way of applying glass to metal.

When learning enamel for the first time, there is a magic moment where you don't know exactly what you are doing. Mistakes often lead to happy accidents. The time between when you are following your eye and ignoring what is "technically correct" can be the moment that sparks innovation. The more you explore, the more you make, the more you master your mistakes.

The wide range of work submitted to the 2019 Enamelist Society Student Exhibition made it difficult to make selections. From the beautiful, Plique-a-Jour of "Jewel Beetle" by Hannah Zitzelberger to the unconventionally wearable "Gut Feeling" by Nicholas Hesson it was a colorful spectrum of student exploration.

Ultimately, my selections were based on numerous factors: Did the artist consider craft? Were the edges stoned? Was the enamel fired properly? Was craft used as a framing device? How did the artist use enamel? Did the process support the composition, as used in "All about loving you" by Zih-ci Liang or the texture of "Kindergarten Floor Brooch" by Michelle Plamondon. The hardest category to measure was overall presentation. Is the object wearable? If so, what role does the body play? If it was presented as an object, how did it interact with the space it occupied?

The work that I chose to be in the exhibition represented the best of what was entered. As an online show, presented solely in a digital format, I can't help but think there were a few missed opportunities. If it is jewelry, it should be photographed on the body. If it is a reliquary, build up the narrative by shooting it in situ. As a juror, we are asked to read the objects as they are presented to us. It is a difficult task to read these objects with no perception of scale, wearability or use therefore we are relegated to the technical, composition and the appropriate use of material.

It was a pleasure to see the work and it I cannot wait to see the exhibition come together.